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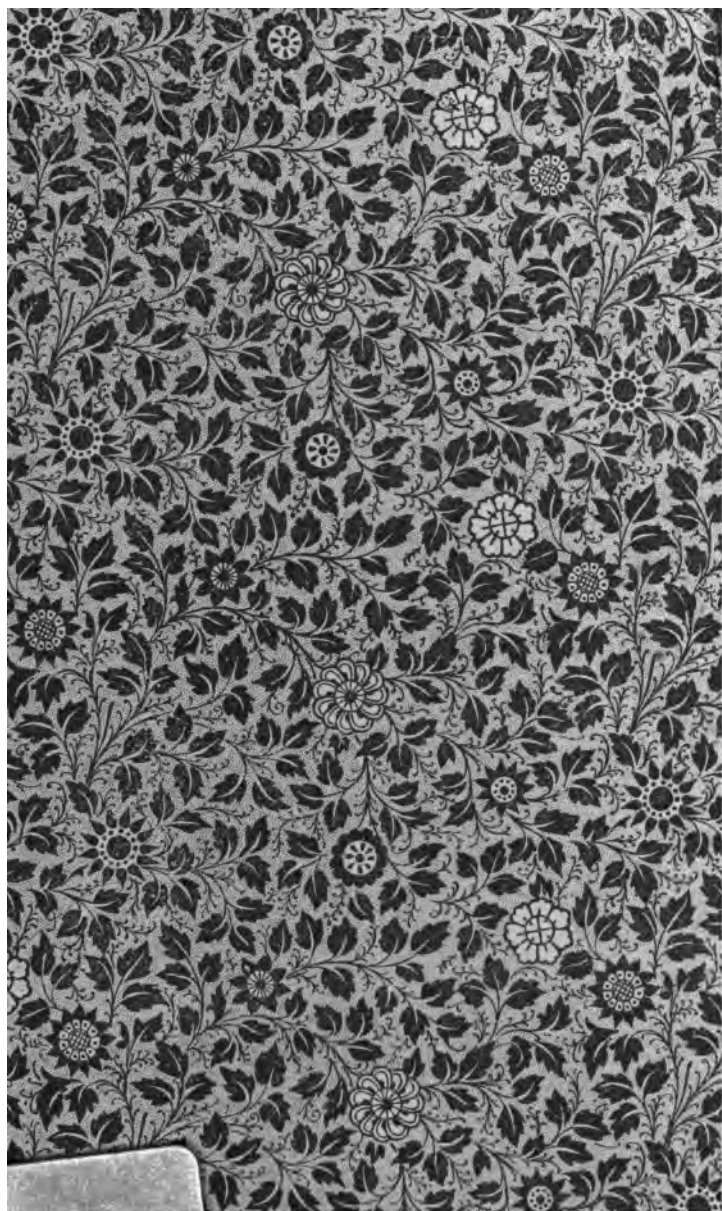
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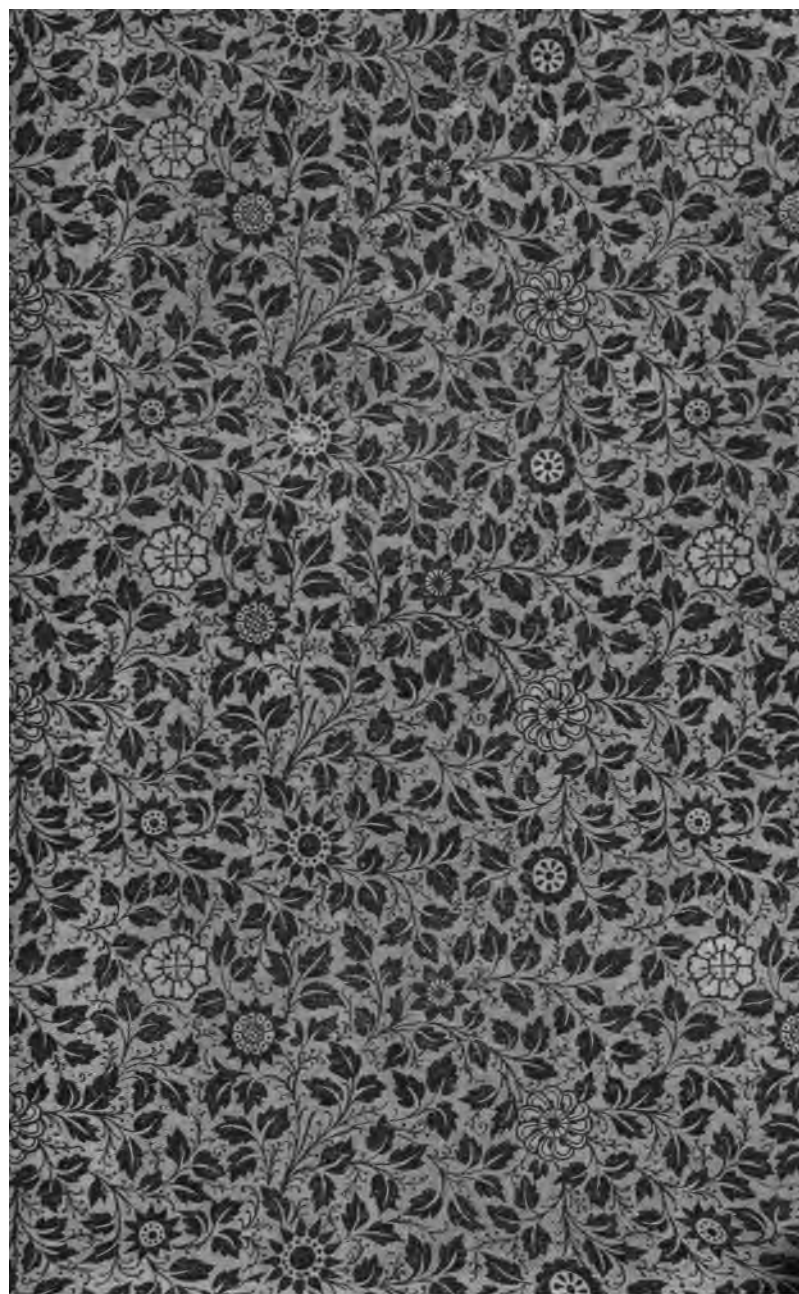
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KEEPING  
THE VOW

MRS MORGAN MORGAN









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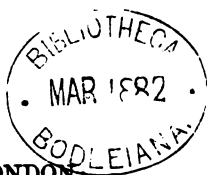
KEEPING THE VOW.



# KEEPING THE VOW.

A Story.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"JOINED TO AN IDOL," "JEANNIE GORDON,"  
ETC., ETC.



LONDON.

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TO  
THE DEAR AND HOLY MEMORY OF  
**Alexander Penrose Forbes,**  
BISHOP OF BRECHIN,  
WHOSE NAME IS A "HOUSEHOLD WORD"  
FOR "ALL THAT IS LOVELY AND OF GOOD REPORT;"  
AND OF  
MY BELOVED GRANDFATHER,  
**Major George Foss Westcott,**  
LATE H.B.M. 77TH REGT.,  
A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS AS OF THE CROWN,  
I REVERENTLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATE  
THIS STORY OF A HERO IN WHOSE CHARACTER I  
HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO PORTRAY SOME OF  
THOSE VIRTUES AND GRACES WHICH  
MADE THE BISHOP AND THE  
SOLDIER SO LOVED AND  
SO HONOURED.



## NOTE TO THE READER.

So much of the following story is *founded upon fact*, that the *biographical* rather than the merely narrative style has been aimed at throughout; and in the Dialogues, the endeavour has been made to preserve the stiffness and formality, characteristic of a generation which believed Lord Chesterfield and Sir Charles Grandison to be the real and fictitious models of good breeding and social courtesy.



# KEEPING THE VOW.

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## PART I.

### How the Vow was Made.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE name above the 'low-browed' shop-door was 'David Hepburn,' in letters somewhat tarnished; but brighter gilding would have seemed out of keeping with the quaint, narrow street of Ennerleddie, a town as pleasant for situation as any in all bonnie Scotland. The shop itself, which to our modern ideas would have appeared humble and insignificant enough, was much patronised, not only by the better-class townspeople, but by county families in the neighbourhood; for its proprietor was respected by all who knew him, and was a man in whose history there was a flavour of romance. He had been 'out' with the Earl of Mar in 'the rising of '15,' and had been slightly wounded at Sheriffmuir. In 'the '45' he had taken

no active part, being by that time a 'douce merchant,' with a wife and bairns; but it was shrewdly suspected that his house had been a rendezvous for Jacobites of his own class, and its quaint chambers and recesses the occasional refuge and hiding-place of non-juring clergymen and other persons of higher social and political importance. Probably he had helped the cause that he loved best by gifts of money—for, although his business had always seemed large, he had never been counted a wealthy man; and his mode of life, though not wanting in substantial comfort, was now, and ever had been, simple and homely.

For the last five years he had been a widower; and of his children, only one, the youngest, was still spared to him. This child, a girl nearly eighteen years old, had been absent from home for some weeks, visiting relations who lived in Port Henry, a small fishing-town on the north-eastern coast; she had been accompanied and guarded by an elderly woman who had been her nurse, and in whom Mr. Hepburn placed great confidence.

This evening the travellers were expected home, and the shop was closed earlier than usual—a messenger from the harbour, which was about three miles distant from the town, having run up to tell the master that the little trading vessel, the *Bonnie Mary*, was entering the roads. David Hepburn saw his two assistants depart, and then himself locked the door; for his dwelling-house was at some little distance from the main street, near the cathedral

ruins, and had, in fact, at one time been a part of the monastic buildings.

The evening was one of those in early summer, the beauty of which appears to greater perfection in the north of Scotland than in any other part of Great Britain. There is often a great calm in the sky—blue indeed—but beginning to be touched with the delicate pink flush and undertone of pale gold that, after the sun has really sunk to his seeming rest (rather, thanks be to God, to his ever-renewed awakening), will deepen into the red, rich glory of the ‘after-glow’—a glory inconceivable to those who have not seen it illuminate the hills and moors and woods of a Scottish landscape.

Maister Hepburn could not help lingering and letting the cool, yet quiet, air breathe its refreshing influence upon his face, flushed by the day’s confinement in a small, close shop. The feelings of his heart were just then very much in accordance with the calm gladness of the summer evening, and so he walked home to meet a great sorrow; and as he went, dreamed of nothing but coming joy. A little surprise did indeed touch his mind that his girl was not at the door to meet him; this, and the hurrying-out-of-sight motion of the younger maid of the house as he crossed the lobby, conveyed their own notes of warning, and mercifully deadened his sensations, so that the coming blow did not fall with such crushing force as it would otherwise have done. Going straight into the parlour, which, as in many old-fashioned Scotch houses,



opened into the front kitchen, he called out, forcing his voice to cheerful tones—

‘Clemmie, my lassie, whaur are ye?’

There followed a little time of silence—really a short pause—but long enough to be appreciable by the man who waited; and then an elderly woman, still in out-door apparel, came in from the kitchen slowly;—slowly also she closed the door before she turned and faced her master, saying distinctly, and without any perceptible quiver in her voice—

‘Clementina is no’ wi’ me, Maister Hepburn; but dinna ye flyte upo’ me; it’s no’ my blame; I hae dune my vera best.’ And now, at last, the old woman’s voice trembled, whilst one long bony hand tightened convulsively upon the other.

It was a moment of agony for Maister Hepburn; he closed his eyes, and a little shiver passed over him, so that his stalwart frame seemed to totter and sway as he said, hoarsely—

‘What is’t, wuman? What’s wrang wi’ the bairn? She’s no’ deid—surely ye’ll no’ be tellin’ me *that*?’

‘Na, na, she’s no’ deid; she’s as weel in her health as me or yersel’, Maister Hepburn.’

Another and different look swept over the old man’s face; he put out his hand to grasp the woman’s.

‘It’s no’ possible that she’s fallen in wi’ yon man again—wi’ her ne’er-do-weel cousin, Ronald McDonald?’

‘Aye, maister, just that; it’s a fac’; it was bude

to be; and I could na' haud her frae him ony gate.'

'But, oh! Tibbie, woman, tell me she's mairried wi' him; is't a' richt that way?'

'Whisht, man! ye sudna' be thinkin' o' sic ill-doing things! Aye, she's mairried wi' him fast eneuch. But I maun speak the truth; it was na just a'tegither *his* will that sae it sud be; he had tellt the daft lassie wha lippens till him as gin he were Sanct Peter himsel', that what folks ca' a *Scotch* mairrage (the whilk is a richt down insult and affront to put upo' the decent country), was a' that was needfu'; but me and Maister Birnie, honest man, got word o't, an' we took them afore the meenister wi'out waitin' for leave o' him, the creature!'

Isabella Allardyce spoke hurriedly—it may be said nervously; and her master understood all too well the terribly sorrowful meaning beneath her words. She, watching him furtively, saw that he did so, and could not help breathing a little sigh of relief on her own account that the worst of her trying task was over, even whilst she keenly sympathised with him in his sorrow. His eyes fell, and his voice was lowered to a whisper as he said—

'Then it *bude* to be; neither ye nor John Birnie could hinder it.'

'Na, maister, ye would na' had us to dae that.'

The father, who had been so happy half-an-hour ago, and was so sorrow-stricken now, turned away and groaned; he leant both arms upon an old-

fashioned, much-carved, many-drawered bureau that stood near, and buried his grey head between them. The face of the woman watching him took a look of tender, womanly anxiety. Going close to him, she said—

‘Maister Hepburn, sir, ye mauna tak’ it sae sair to heart; the lassie thocht that it was a’ richt, ye can weel believe; and there’s mony a woman wha contents hersel’ wi’ the like o’ that mairrage a’ her days.’

‘Hisht, woman! a dochter o’ mine suld hae kent better, seein’ she was aye brocht up i’ the fear of the Lord, and the teachin’ o’ His Holy Church,’ Maister Hepburn replied, sorrowfully; then, another thought taking possession of his mind, he asked, eagerly, ‘Of course, Tibbie, it was a chaapel meenister ye took them afore; one o’ oor ain folk?’

‘Aye, surely that; ye could na’ think we would hae taken oor lassie afore ony ither!’

‘But it was na ane o’ thae qualifeed meenisters, as they ca’ them, the vera name o’ whilk is an abomination i’ my ears.’

‘Deed, Maister Hepburn, I kept thinkin’ o’ a’ that would hae been your wish i’ the maitter, and though there’s a qualifeed chaapel i’ Port Henry—an’ it’s whaur Maister Birnie’s bude to worship, seein’ there’s nane ither—yet whiles there comes a gude an’ holy man, Bishop——’

‘Aye, aye, I ken; Bishop Ross, ane o’ the best o’ the faithful; leal to his God an’ his king. An’ was’t *him* ye were gettin’?’

'Just that. We kent—Maistress Birnie did, for she's terrible taen up wi' him, o' his bein' i' the town, hidin' awa i' a bit hoosie doun i' the Sea Gate; an' when 'twas fairly dark, as dark as it can be i' these lang days; eh! I never wearied afore yon day ('twas the achteenth o' June, last month ye ken), o' the bonny blessed licht, when it seemed as gin the gloamin' would na ever come, then we stole awa doun i' couples, first Maister Birnie, and him—Ronald, ye ken—then me an' oor lassie, puir bairn, and we creepit in an' gotten the door snecked, as gin we were thieves an' robbers or plotters o' mischief. The gude wife, wha is ain sister to Maistress Birnie, an' wha luves the Bishop as I loes the vera apple o' my ee, she had made a' ready i' a bit roomie that's gotten a box-bed place intillt that ye wuld na ken frae the wa' itsel, an' whaur the Bishop buides to hide whiles. There was a table wi' a bit decent white cloth, and a glimmer o' licht frae a rush candle to let the meenister see his buik. I can tell ye, I was sair ta'en up wi' *him*: eh! he's a fine man, yon—a *real* pretty man, wi' a pair o' gleds's een i' the heid o' him; but for a thae een, wi' a smile that's gey an' sweet, playin' about his mouth, whiles, when some bonnie thocht i' his soul sends it oot like a flag that's a signal o' gude news. But ye'll be wearyin' to hear tell o' the mairrage itsel'; it was na ower lang o' duin as the Bishop bude to be awa' that nicht, an' there was a boatie waitin' on him at the harbour steps, no sae vera far off whaur his late majesty, King James the Eighth,

first set his foot i' his ancient kingdom; sae, when he had shaken hands wi' the young wife an' her man, and wished them gude speed, he went his way, an' we bided till he was weel out o' the road. Then we slipped awa' much as we had come, only noo Maister Birnie was wi' me, an' Maistress McDonald, she gaed wi' her man to their ain lodgin'.'

'An' whaur's the puir misguided lassie the noo?'

'She's nae lassie; she's a gude wife, ye ken. Weel, she's awa' wi' her man to Aberdeen; he's gotten some wark to due i' the new woollen mills just settin' up there; an' we'll hope he'll dae't.'

'Aye, we'll hope the best o' him; but, Tibbie, did na my dochter send ony bit word, or token to me?'

'Aye, did she, Maister Hepburn; she grat sair, an' hung aboot my neck, the puir bit lambie, like the bairn she is, for she's no auchteen year auld yet, an' bid me tell ye that she loes ye sair weel, and hopes ye'll forgive her because she just could na say "No" to Ronald.'

'Puir body! puir lassie! it'll no' be lang afore she finds oot what a creature it is she's ta'en up wi', an' then——'

Maister Hepburn did not finish his sentence; but Tibbie Allardyce understood that he meant that when his girl would need, as she surely would, sooner or later, the shelter of his home, it would be opened to her freely and lovingly; for although his nature was strong, it was not hard, and he had

so humble an opinion of himself, that he could not think with undue harshness of the failings of others.

That evening, which had commenced with such bright anticipations, closed mournfully, and in the sweet early dawning of a fair new day Mistress Allardyce, wakeful and restless herself, heard, in the intervals of her short dozes, her master's step on the floor of the chamber above hers, and every now and then her master's low moan of pain, mingled with words that she was sure were fragments of prayers.

## CHAPTER II.

MAISTER HEPBURN had much cause for his grief of heart; he knew the evil of Ronald McDonald's character, and that knowledge was not gained from mere report or hearsay, for he had had him under his own roof for many years; neither was it the result of any unkindly prejudice, for he was his own great-nephew, his only, and long ago dead sister's only grandson, whose young mother had died in giving him birth, and whose father perished six years later in the '45. Naturally, then, he wished to think as well of him as possible, and ever endeavoured to make excuses for his evil conduct; but on the discovery that this ill-disposed youth had won away his daughter's heart to himself, then, indeed, Maister Hepburn found it necessary to take stern measures; he endeavoured to keep the cousins apart, plainly telling Clementina that wild, unsettled, capricious-natured, and extravagant, worse than all, *godless* Ronald McDonald could be no fitting mate for a dounce lass, whose whole short life had been spent in the sweet seclusion and sacred shelter of virtuous and godly home.

Clementina did not rebel outwardly, children

rarely did in those olden days ; but she drooped and pined, and lost not only her blithe spirit (which her father, strongly sure of the wisdom of his own decision, could perhaps have borne), but also her health, and in order that that might be recruited, he sent her away with her nurse by sea to Port Henry, which had even then a great reputation for healthiness, and is certainly, in its peninsular situation, and exposure to all the winds of heaven, a marked contrast in climate to Ennerleddie, nestling in its long carse that ‘slips and slides with pliant grace’ under the shelter of low, richly-cultivated hills (and those again guarded by distant higher ranges), down to the shores of one of the bonniest of those inland seas which we call ‘Firths,’ and which, in its own especial charm of landscape and brightness of colouring, might almost be taken for an Italian lake put down by mistake in our colder North Britain.

Maister Hepburn received letters—two or three, for but few epistles were written in those days—telling him that the change of air and scene, and the bracing breezes of the North Sea (blowing straight across from Norway), were effecting their hoped-for good work, and that his “‘ae bairn” was regaining health, strength, and sense ;’ so wrote worthy Maister Birnie, a respectable, retired seaman, and owner of vessels ; and so indeed she really was ; but the selfish man who had already wrought her much ill suddenly reappeared, took advantage of the surprise to work upon her unguarded feelings,



and by fervid appeals against the cruelty and injustice of the hasty dismissal he had received at her father's hands, gained her consent to become his by one of the many forms which the 'irregular Scotch marriage' takes to itself. So bad-hearted was Ronald that, when he made this proposition, he had little, if any, faith in the legality of the act; or, at any rate, argued within himself that an 'irregular marriage' could easily be set aside if it should prove necessary or desirable to do so;—a mistake sometimes made by men of his evil tone of mind, whereas the only redeeming feature of these proceedings are the difficulty of undoing them, and the weight given to hasty, ill-considered words, because of the importance of the acts done under cover thereof.

Before Ronald could contrive to convey Clementina away secretly, as he had hoped to do, her temporary guardians, partly by their own vigilance, partly by her natural innocent openness, discovered what had been done, and immediately upon that discovery had followed that marriage ceremony of which Mistress Tibbie gave her master her graphic description.

There was food enough for painful thought in this story, and Maister Hepburn's heart was full of pain as he set himself in the early hours of morning to the task of writing to his daughter. The letter, in its tender gentleness, its firm unfaltering reproof, its self-forgetfulness, moved Clementina deeply, and so awakened the sense of the real sin she had committed that it could never slumber again, and though it did not shake her love for her husband

—as, indeed, her father would not have had it do—it yet taught her that she must not anticipate a life of sunshine, and made her understand that its probable storms and darkness would be the natural results of its having been an utterly self-chosen life, chosen without any reference to the guiding of circumstances (the very voice of God to those who will be guided thereby), but, rather with defiant disregard to their manifest disapproval. Under the influence of these newly-awakened feelings, Clementina McDonald wrote to her father a letter which gave him comfort by its tone of true penitence, and its womanly, responsible sense of the duty that she owed to her husband, none the less surely because he never ought to have been her husband. After the receipt of this letter, Maister Hepburn settled himself to face steadily the loneliness of his life, which did not seem to grow less oppressive as time went on. He had occasional letters from his daughter, short and meagre epistles, for, as she could not speak of her husband's daily increasing indifference, and even unkindness (what Scotch woman with anything of the generic Scotch character could have made such a revelation?), she knew not what to write about, and gradually she ceased to write at all; more than a year had passed without any direct communication between the father and daughter, when another, and even more terribly sudden blow than that of six years before, fell with overwhelming force upon the former. His son-in-law had some weeks previously visited Ennerleddie

upon business connected with the Aberdeen woollen mills in which he was foreman, and learning from him that he was shortly to proceed to Edinburgh upon similar business, Maister Hepburn empowered him to receive certain sums of money at the bank of the Messrs. F. Brothers, and with them, on his behalf, pay sundry merchants in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, accounts owing to them for goods purchased for his shop.\*

One morning about the time when he was looking for the return of his son-in-law, who had promised to bring the receipted bills, and things with the purchase of which he had been entrusted, Maister Hepburn received legal intimation, through his bankers, that Ronald McDonald had presented a paper at the bank empowering him to withdraw the whole of the money standing there in David Hepburn's name, and had received it; for, as he was an accredited agent of the woollen manufacturers in Aberdeen, and had also frequently transacted business for his father-in-law, the suspicions of the bankers had not, at first, been aroused; but the junior partner, a keenly intelligent man, who had been absent on the day when the money had been handed over, immediately on hearing of the transaction

\* *AUTHOR'S NOTE.—At the period of time intended in the story—the end of the last century, there were banks in only two towns in Scotland, Edinburgh and Glasgow: and it was a rare thing for persons living in the northern counties to keep banking accounts at all, because of the difficulties of transmitting the money, there being no county-town banks on which drafts could be drawn.*

divined that there was something wrong, and carefully examining the cheque or paper presented by Ronald, detected that the figures and words had been cleverly altered from eight hundred to eighteen hundred pounds. The bankers wrote, that on this discovery they had, on their own responsibility, without waiting for orders from Maister David Hepburn, sent officers of justice after McRonald, and put out placards offering a reward for his apprehension; but not until they had at first searched his known haunts in Edinburgh and sent an express messenger to his employers in Aberdeen to learn if he had returned to them; finding, as they expected, that he had not, and had not been heard of by them since leaving their mills for Edinburgh, they had at once instituted these legal proceedings against him.

Maister David Hepburn, though now seventy-three years of age, and feeling the infirmities which those years warranted his feeling, did not sink helpless and hopeless under this fearful blow; he was sustained chiefly by the thought of his poor daughter and the desire to comfort her. Never doubting that she had been deserted by her husband and left alone in Aberdeen, he joined a company of horsemen who were going thither, and went to seek her with the intention of bringing her home; but he found that she had accompanied Ronald to Edinburgh, and the angry landlady, to whom arrears of rent were due, could not give him a hint respecting her present whereabouts. Now, indeed, the poor old man was nearly prostrate, and the fear of what his daughter

might be suffering caused him keener anguish than the loss of his money had done ; nevertheless, gathering up his mental and bodily strength, he returned to Ennerleddie, and by the sale of his shop and business, in which for many years he had dealt uprightly, he was enabled to pay the merchants to whom he owed the money his son-in-law had heartlessly stolen, and also the various bills which Ronald had contracted in his name ; this done, he stood, almost penniless, but full of honour before the world. The question how he was henceforth to live yet remained to be answered. In his boyhood and early manhood, at the close of the brief soldiering in which he had followed his natural chief and kinsman to the field, he had often amused his leisure hours with weaving with the handloom, an occupation familiar to most of the men of his native country, Banffshire ; and with this he resolved to occupy his early mornings and evenings, whilst for the intervening hours of each day he with rare resolution and courage sought and obtained the office of foreman and chief accountant in his own old shop under its new master, who gave him as liberal a salary as he dared to offer without arousing in him those scruples which some people call 'Scotch pride,' but which are more truly the result of the careful conscientiousness that will not accept as a gift that which has not been justly earned as wages.


One great comfort he had ; the faithful devotion of Tibbie Allardyce, who, not only unassisted and unpaid, rendered him every little service that he

needed, but also expended the small savings of years of labour in the purchase of fitting raiment for herself, and of many little comforts for her aged master.

The long winter passed thus, and the father and nurse almost despaired of hearing any word of their lost darling; but many a gloomy picture did each secretly draw of the sort of life she must now be leading, the worst feature of its misery being her possible knowledge of her husband's sin against her father. April had come at last, generally in Scotland a cold, bleak month, though with occasional fitful gleams of spring beauty and warmth; and on its third Sunday, which was one of those unusually bright days, David Hepburn went out to walk—for unlike the generality of his neighbours in Ennerleddie, he had a custom of taking a quiet stroll on Sunday afternoons, whenever the weather permitted, and the custom had long been to him as one of those many subsidiary 'means of grace' which each individual Christian, according to his character and tone of thought, is privileged to discover and use. It is often imagined that the world had to wait for our century before people in general learnt to love and appreciate nature—her charms and her lessons; but I verily believe that there were very many humble and unknown men and women in past days, even in the despised eighteenth century, who, as well as the few well-known and distinguished poets and naturalists, had their souls fed and comforted by the teachings of nature, and who,

though they might not call her manifestations by the right names, nor attribute them to the proper physical causes, yet never failed to see in them a manifestation of the love of God, and to trace them to the one cause of all created things, the fathomless, uncreated, and self-existent heart of the Lord and Giver of Life. Certainly, it was so with David Hepburn, and his Sunday afternoon strolls were firm links between the morning and evening worship in the little homely 'upper room' which in 1770 was all that the Episcopalians of that remote northern town dared appropriate to themselves; but where the Lord met them, and, being in the midst of them, made it by His Presence a glorious temple and the very Gate of Heaven.

This third Sunday in April, the weather being April-like in its uncertainty, and the sky clouded, Maister Hepburn, instead of attempting any longer walk, bent his steps towards the Cathedral ruins, which were within sight and easy reach of his own home; he liked well to go there, and, wandering amongst the weed-grown tombs, picture to himself how passing fair must have been the five-aisled building in the day of its glory and beauty; but this afternoon his meditations were cut short, and thoughts of anything but the living present and its dearest personal interest were banished from his mind. He directed his steps towards the chapter-house, the roof of which still remained entire; the air was heavy, and there was no one to be seen in the place; truly, a 'Sunday stillness' reigned



around, and yet from the moment of his entrance he felt the indescribable sensation, (which all of us have at some time or other experienced) of not being alone; he *felt*, although he could not see, the presence of some other human being besides himself. With all his real godliness of spirit and considerable mental strength, he yet could hardly have been a north-country Scotchman, of that day and generation, and not have been deeply superstitious; his soul shook within him, the words of Job came welling almost to his lips, and he verily believed that he was about to see a spirit. He sat down in one of the olden monk's canopied seats, heedless of the damp, and of the nettles that clustered round it; and with every nerve strung, but with complete outward quietness, he waited for the vision, or the voice. And that came. He did not wait in vain; a visitant indeed came to him, but a material, not a spiritual one.



## CHAPTER III.

As Maister Hepburn sat in the chapter-house waiting, there came to his ear a little swish in the grass, a little rustle of garments, and then a voice, low, husky, and trembling; but how familiar, and how dear!—saying one word, the one yearning cry of humanity repeated in many forms and many tongues, yet ever with the same deep though sometimes unconscious meaning underlying all—‘Father!’ For one brief moment David Hepburn shudderingly closed his eyes, certain that now the vision would appear; then by ‘love’s divine instinct’ rendered ‘wise,’ he swiftly opened them in time to catch the falling form of his daughter, and to press her still young and still lovely face against his bosom. She had not absolutely fainted, that is to say, she had not lost consciousness; but she trembled and shook as much from bodily weakness as from mental agitation. Her father held her firmly with one arm, whilst with the other hand he tenderly chafed her cold fingers, speaking low, caressing words such as the Scotch keep for bairns (as the outlet Nature must find for her stored-up tenderness), but asking no questions, expressing no surprise. When at last

she felt soothed, and began to offer explanations, he gently put them aside saying—

‘Na, na, my bairn; we’ll bide a wee, an’ hear a’ your tale when you’re i’ yer ain hame, an’ yer ain bed, the which I’m thinkin’ yer sair needin’.’

‘Ay, father, that am I, and Tibbie, if she will help me.’

‘Deed, will she. Ye ken she never gangs abroad o’ the Sundays, excep’ to the chaapel, an’ for ance it’s weel that it suld be sae. Lean upo’ me, my bairn, we shall soon be there; it’s but a wee bit way, sae dinna ye let yer hert doun, we’ll dae brawly yet.’

Short as the distance was, it was not accomplished quickly. Poor Clementina’s steps needed much guiding, and her frail little frame much support; and her father was thankful when he had at last safely deposited her upon the long, narrow, straight-backed, velvet-covered shelf, with crooked, gilded legs ending in claws, which did duty for a couch or sofa, and was deemed a grand addition to the furniture of a small tradesman’s house.

Never was erring child and penitent wanderer treated more lovingly than was sorrowing, travel-stained Clementina McDonald, father and nurse rendering her helpful services, and speaking kindly comforting words. When she had been refreshed by a piece of wheaten bread and a cup of choice claret, of which her father still had a small and much-prized store, and her weary frame supported by soft goose-feather pillows brought from the beds upstairs, and which made the sofa a different affair

from what it was in its pristine state, she was allowed to tell the history of the past six months, concerning which her listeners had formed many conjectures, none of them perhaps wilder or more painful than the events which had really occurred. The story went back for its commencement to the time, more than six months before, when McRonald had gone to Edinburgh (really upon his evil errand, but, as he told his wife, upon his usual business for the firm in which he was foreman) and, for the first time since her marriage, took her with him, telling her that he would probably be obliged to remain some time in the city. But they had been there scarcely three days when he hurried her away, at almost a moment's notice, on board a trading vessel bound for Antwerp.

Clementina's miseries on the voyage were not light, nor when she did reach Antwerp was her life happy, or even comfortable. Her husband would not answer any of her questions as to why he had left Scotland, or what arrangements he had made with his employers, the Messrs. McLaren. Neither would he allow her to write to her father or attempt to send any message to him. That he had some money was evident to her, although little of it found its way into her pocket, and frequently she suffered from want of even the necessaries of life, and oftener still from loneliness and nervous apprehension at being left in a strange lodging, amongst people whose language she did not understand, and who, her instinct told her, were not

respectable. After four months of this life, she was again hurried off, this time to Hull, from whence after a brief space they went by sea to Dundee. The night of their arrival there, as she sat in the public room of the low, mean inn, or rather tavern, to which her husband had taken her, her eye was attracted by a placard or handbill, torn and begrimed, offering a reward for the apprehension of the forger McRonald, who had absconded from Edinburgh in October, 1769. To use her own expression, 'the room swam round wi' her,' and she must have fainted; for the next thing she remembered was finding herself lying upon a bed with people around her, amongst them her husband, who, hurriedly declaring that she was all right now, turned every one out of the room, and, as soon as they were alone together, went close to her, and in the low tones of most terrible anger, and with brutal oaths told her that she had almost been the undoing of him by her cursed folly. She implored him to tell her the truth—to say that he was not that which that dreadful handbill called him; he only laughed—a laugh the remembrance of which seemed to curdle her blood even then as she told the tale; and taking out a few guineas and other coins, put them into her hand, and told her to make the best use she could of them. 'Where are you going? What are you going to do?' she cried in terror. 'Relieve you of my presence once and for all,' was his reply as he turned and left the room. She was too weak in body, and too overcome by fear, to attempt to

follow him ; she heard him tell some of the women on the stairs that he was going for a doctor for his wife, and ask directions as to the way. She hoped against hope that he was really going to do this ; but hour followed hour, and neither he nor any doctor appeared. The people of the house treated her with not unnatural suspicion, and in her sense of helpless misery she almost lost her reason. For some days she was unable to leave her bed ; but, as soon as she could, she set off in a vessel bound for Aberdeen, and when arrived there, after many inquiries concerning boats sailing for Ennerleddie, could only find one going as far as Portsoy ; and from that place—to the horror of her father and Tibbie when they heard it—she had walked to Ennerleddie, occasionally, indeed, getting a lift in some rough cart, or a mount behind a horseman ; but, even with these helps, the way had seemed terribly long and weary, and at that period not free from peril. Her nearest way home, once she had entered Ennerleddie, lay across the cathedral-yard, and she had gladly sought shelter from one of the passing showers, and rest for her wearied limbs, in what had once been the Baptistery, from the darkness of which she had seen her father pass into the chapter-house, and moved by the sight of him, and the signs of infirmity that had grown upon him since last seeing him, she had become almost afraid to accost him, and not until she felt herself about to faint had she ventured to leave her corner, and call out the one word which filled her heart almost to breaking.

So the long story, told feebly, and yet with feverish eagerness, came to an end; and the listeners could make no comment, could only soothe and caress the now gasping, white-faced speaker; but, putting aside their entreaties that she would lie still and rest, she raised herself to grasp her father's arm, and to exclaim, with passionate energy concentrated upon the one question which she had come home to ask, 'Father, say it's no true! say he's no the man meant in yon terrible paper: ye ken it's anither body, and no Ronald; div ye no ken that, father?' For answer came the falling of her father's eyes, and the bowing of her father's head, which bent lower and lower until it reached her arm, and then the lips pressed themselves upon it with trembling yet close-clinging love. Isabella Allardyce, with the beautiful delicacy of feeling common to many of her nation, stole gently from the room, and in these very acts of father and nurse Clementina read the too sure truth: the grief was one too deep for tears; there came only one great sob which shook her frame, and then at last the question which David Hepburn had been dreading.

'Whose name was't, father? Mr. McLaren's? and was he very angry?'

'Na, it wasna' Mr. McLaren's, my lassie; an' I dinna think that it's kent by folk in general whase siller it was.'

'But, father, will he be punished if they can find him?'

'I dinna richtly ken, lassie; but I'm thinkin'

maybe no, because the man whose siller he used has forgi'en him, and isna' wishfu' to hae the law on him. Yet 'deed, my lassie, the best we can a' hope an' desire is that Ronald may keep awa' frae us, an' I maun just be tellin' ye sae, though it hurts me sair to hae to say 't.'

There was a long pause; then Clementina said—

'Father, will ye no tell me wha it was that he wranged sae sairly?'

'I would rather that ye suldna ken; but if ye maun hae it, ye maun: it was siller o' mine that the laddie took, an' I hae forgi'en him.'

The look in Clementina's eyes, and the wail of pain that broke from her dry, trembling lips, wrung her aged father's heart, and, with a touch of peremptory parental authority, he said—

'Clemmie, we will hae nae mair words upo' this maiter; the ill deed's dune, and we will put it oot o' oor thochts; an' my wish is that we cry upon Tibbie, and let her get ye till yer bed, for indeed it's the only place fit for ye.'

As Tibbie was undressing her whilom nursling, the latter suddenly turned to her, and, throwing her arms round her neck, whispered some words in her ear.

'Preserve 's a'!' cried the old woman; 'but I had my ain thochts that this was i' the wind. Eh! my bonnie bairn! my puir wee lambie! an' i' a month's time, ye're thinkin'. Hoo will we ever get the maister told? Honest man, he'll gae clean doited wi' the thocht o't!'

Tibbie revolved that question of getting 'the maister told' in her mind through the hours of that night, in which Clemmie slept a heavy sleep in her faithful and still strong arms; and, having at last found what she thought a good plan, she carried it out the next morning. She would not allow Clementina to rise; and when she had given her food, and had 'sorted' her bed, Tibbie called Maister David Hepburn to come and see her; she herself, after chatting for a few minutes with the two, went to a vast closet in one end of the room, and brought forth from its depths a cumbersome old cradle, much carved—like nearly all the furniture in the house—and began dusting it within and without. One amused look Maister Hepburn gave, then a glance at his daughter's flushed face changed it into one of touched, tender feeling, and, leaning over Clementina, he whispered—

'An' will a bairn o' yours lie i' your ain auld cradle, my wuman?'

'Ay, father, if a' things gae richt, an' the Lord will. Oh! to think that after a' these years o' mairied life, my first-born suld come to me here i' my ain hame.'

The old man rose, and said—

'I am glad for ye, my lassie; the name o' the Lord be praised!' Then adding more slowly and solemnly, as he put his hands on her head, and let them rest there, 'The angel that has redeemed me from all evil, bless my bairn, an' my bairn's bairn!'



## CHAPTER IV.

I HAVE said that Ennerleddie is favoured in situation beyond most of the towns of northern Scotland; its surrounding hills, and its nearness to the sea, give it a sheltered mildness of climate scarcely believed in by southerners who have not happened to experience it; and many fruits and flowers flourish there that will not grow in other places in the same latitude; yet, for all this comparative mildness, the winters there are sometimes very real winters, the snow lying for days in unfrequented parts of the town, and in those higher parts of the valley which lie farthest from the sea.

A winter of this type was that of 1770: it began early, and lasted long; perhaps its coldest day, when the temperature was lowest, was that of the fifteenth of December; the snow was falling swiftly and steadily upon the already white town, and before one house in a secluded spot not far from the cathedral ruins it lay so thickly as to be almost a drift.

Through the half-drawn curtains of one of the front windows of Maister Hepburn's ancient red-sandstone house might be seen the bright gleam of



fire-light flushing the snow within its immediate influence with rosy life; but although it gave this glow to the outer world, there was no cheerfulness, save its own, within the room, the ceiling of which was low, and divided in the centre by a heavy beam black with age, as was also the wainscoting and the high, richly carved chimney-piece, beside which, in a straight-backed oaken chair, sat Maister Hepburn, reading in a silver-clasped volume that, too heavy to be held, lay upon a small round table drawn close to his elbow. Opposite the fire was a huge four-post bed (a treasure of elaborate age-blackened carving), with its curtains, those nearest to the door closely drawn. In the midst of linen, coarse indeed in texture, but as snowy-white as the covering of the outer world, lay Clementina McDonald, bearing on her brow and in her eyes the indescribable, yet, to all who have once seen such, the easily recognised look of one who, having received 'a token' from the great King, must hasten to go down into 'the swellings of Jordan.' Cradled close to her heart, yet getting but faint warmth therefrom, was a babe of nearly seven months old, his sweet sleep undisturbed by the fitful beating of his mother's aching heart—aching because she must needs go forth and leave him almost before she had had time to realise the joy of possessing him.

At the close of the preceding May (a bonnie 'Poet's May' that year, and not the usually grim, *dour* period which in Scotland passes by that sweet name), Clementina saw her first-born child laid in

her father's arms, and in that moment all the bitterness and much of the sadness caused by the griefs of the previous seven years went out of her young heart, and in the great bliss of her motherhood she almost forgot the woes of her wifehood. David Hepburn never murmured that now he would have to work the harder; he only rejoiced in an added motive for work, and Tibbie returned with loving zeal to her half-forgotten nursery cares. As blithe a baptism as might be had when 'the bairn's father was wanting,' and whose absence could not be regretted, was that of the babe, to whom grandfather and mother agreed in giving the names sacred and dear to them both, the names of Stuart Alexander, being that of the family who alone they believed should be their country's rulers, and the Christian name of their own beloved minister who admitted this child, as he had done Clementina herself, aye, and the poor erring father also, into the covenant of promise. All this chastened gladness brightening the ancient, monastic house soon came to an end. Consumption, which had long been dormant in Mrs. McDonald's system, showed itself in all its fatal power with added strength, because of the check it had received in the expectation and birth of her child, and having made rapid strides, she was now, in the middle of December, in the last stage of that disease which is *the* scourge of our northern climes; and, as we have said, she had received the 'token from the great King,' and knew that there could be no long tarrying.

She was lying very quietly under her snowy coverings, faintly scented with peat smoke; her occasional hollow cough was for some time the only sound, save the pleasant crackling of the wood fire that stirred the profound stillness of both inner and outer world; but, after a long period of such silence, she said—

‘Father, is na Tibbie a weary lang time o’ comin’? I’m hopin’ she’ll no be ower late i’ bringin’ him.’

‘Na, my lassie, they’ll sure be here the noo, and a’s ready, ye ken, sae there’ll be nae time lost.’

‘Is na it an awfu’ day o’ snaw, father?’

‘Deed is’t, my wuman; are ye cauld? Sall I hap mair claes aboot ye?’ And the old man moved to the bedside.

‘Na, I thank ye; I’m warm enuch; I hae baby. It’s the minister I’m grievin’ for, that he suld hae to come oot i’ sic a storm.’

‘Ye need na fash yerself aboot the minister, honest man! he’s hale and hearty yet, thank the Lord, an’ I doubt he’s no that by sittin’ i’ the ingle neuk i’ wild weather, my wuman. He an’ I hae travelled hill an’ glen afore this day, that he might gie the blessed sacrament to a bit handfu’ o’ oor ain folk wha gathered frae far and near for the blessin’.’

‘Ay, father, I mind ye’re tellin’ us o’ that when ye cam back i’ the evenins lang syne, when I sat upo’ yer knee, an’—an’—Ronald, ye ken, was on a bit creepie beside ye.’

‘Whist, Clemmie, my wuman, do ye no ken ye mauna be speakin’ ower muckle?’

‘I ken that, father, an’ ’deed I *couldna* be speakin’ muckle, gin I micht; but I maun speak twa three words till ye before the minister comes; wull ye no gie me my wull this once, father?’

Mrs. McDonald half raised herself in her bed, and the touch of her thin white hand was enough for the kindly old man.

‘Lie doun, an’ ye sall hae yer wull; only ye maunna be spendin’ a yer strength, for ye’ll need it sair when Maister Lindsay comes.’

‘Father, there’s just twa pints I’m needin’ sair to speak till ye aboot. Dinna ye be tellin’ my bit laddie mair nor is needfu’ aboot his puir father; dinna tell him a’ the truth, as lang ’s ye can haud it frae him; dinna let him grow up wi’ a sair dark shadow o’ shame upo’ his young hert; but, eh! father, see till ’t that he’s learned to be faithfu’ an’ true; oh, see that he learns to hate a lie, an’ to abhor a’ fause ways an’ words. Chasten him, father; dae what ye wull wi’ him; but dinna lat him ever tell a lee, nor brak his spoken word. Oh, say that ye’ll see to ’t, father!’

David Hepburn was deeply moved. ‘I wull see to it, my bairn; as lang ’s I live the laddie sall be taught to hate the sins o’ unfaithfulness, an’ there sall nae sic cleave until him, so help me God!’

Clementina bowed her head, alike awed and satisfied by the solemnity of her father’s words and manner. Presently she spoke again.

‘There’s ae thing mair, an’ I’ll hae dune speakin’. Gin Ronald suld ever come back an’ be a repentant

man, dinna ye turn him frae yer door. He has sinned sair against ye, I ken weel; but oh! for luv o' me, yer ain ae bairn, gie him a word o' kindness, an' tell him, tell him, father, that for a' he's broken my hert, I hae lo'ed him to the vera end. Dinna think me a fule body, but it's just a fac'. I canna help it; I lo'e him noo, as I hae lo'ed him a' the days o' my life.'

The sick woman sank back exhausted, and her father touched her caressingly.

'Na, na, I dinna think ye a fule body, but a patient wife, leal-hearted as wives suld aye be. Never fear, lassie, gin yer man come back I wunna forget that he is my sister's grandson, an' my ae dochter's husband. No, ye maunna move again!' for Clementina attempted to throw her arms round his neck, 'ye'll do yersel' a mischief, an' I'm sure ye're wishfu' to ha'e a quait mind when the minister 'll be here.'

Maister Hepburn moved back to his chair by the fire, and there was again perfect silence for about ten minutes, at the end of which time was heard a little stir in the lobby, and Tibbie entered the room, and, going to the bed-side, after making a sign to her master, who hurried away, said in a whisper—

'The minister's come, my dearie; he's but pitting aff his plaid the whilk is wet an' white wi' the snaw; an' ye're a' ready for him? Will I tak the wee mannie an' lay him doun i' his bit cradle?'

'Eh, Tibbie, let him bide! I'm sure it's nae

wrang; I canna thole his bein' awa; let him bide!'

Tibbie looked and felt perplexed. The feebleness of the dying mother's clasping hold of her bairn, in the estimation of the compassionate nurse, was very strength against which her own healthy vigour and muscular power were impotent.

'Weel, lassie, I'm misdoubtin' it's nae richt; but we'll speer at the minister.'

At that moment the clergyman in charge of the little Episcopalian congregation of Ennerleddie and its outlying districts entered the room. 'The minister' (to give him the homely title, even in these days dear to Scotch ears, and to many Scotch minds meaning all that the true Catholic could desire to be attached thereto) was a perfect picture of a man, tall, large, and powerful of frame, though he carried it somewhat forward, giving him the appearance of a stoop; long ploughed lines in his worn, thin face told as plainly of hardships, mental and physical, as his clear blue eyes and large but well-cut smiling mouth showed rare kindness of heart, whilst his snow-sprinkled hair testified to his having grown old in a service that was indeed to him the service of the Lord.

In his full, flowing white robes, he came in like the snow-flakes, and as softly as they; but the words that he spoke on the threshold were those blessed words glowing through and through with the heat of a dying Saviour's love—those words that bring joy whilst they declare peace, and

that warm and cherish whilst they soothe and calm.

Seeing Mr. Lindsay come in thus, and bearing in his hands the holy vessels for the feast soon to be spread, Tibbie did not know how to intrude a question upon him, and she stood aside somewhat troubled in mind ; but when he had laid his burden on the table reverently prepared for its reception, he went to Clementina, and said, 'Have you thought of anything more since yesterday that you would wish to say to me ?'

'Na, sir, I thank ye, naething mair, save that I'd like to tell ye that I'm muckle happier i' my mind, for I spak to father, an' a' will be richt ; he's been terrible gude an' kind till me.'

'I knew that he would be, if only you would take courage, and speak out your heart to him. I am glad and thankful for you, my dear child ;' and Mr. Lindsay was turning away, but Clementina caught his sleeve.

'Eh, sir, may my bairn bide ? He's here, ye ken. Tibbie said na, but I canna' want him ; he's asleep, an' he'll not disturb us.'

'Surely your bairn may bide ; when the Lord is coming nearer to us than usual is not the time to put away the little ones whom He loves, and who have, as yet, done Him no wrong.'

'Oh ! thank ye, sir ; and may I keep my arm about him ? I would like to gie him up to the Lord when He comes to me an' asks me to dae 't.'

'Do as you will, my dear child ; I have no fear



that you will let your good love for your bairn swallow up the better and holier love.'

So 'the Banner of Love' was unfurled in that ancient room, where once monks had prayed and held counsel together; and the Lord came to that bedside and blessed the babe whom his dying mother (who had no strength for aught else) had strength enough to hold up to His embrace—as surely as ever He blessed the little children on the plains of Galilee; and He blessed the poor mother also, folding her in His arms more lovingly than she folded her one man-child, her first and only bairn.

The following day, the clergyman came again, summoned in haste; for now Clementina's feet were touching the waters, and their sound filling her ears. Still, her child was in her arms, and it was only when her grasp of him relaxed that the watchers were sure that she had passed through the flood and touched the shore of the 'unknown land.'

'It has been sudden at the last,' said Mr. Lindsay, rising from his knees, and grasping David Hepburn's hand. 'Yesterday I did not think that so soon all would be over.'

'Nae mair did I, Maister Lindsay; I thoct we nicht hae keepet her a whilie yet; but this vera forenoon Maister Laidlaw tellt me that he mis-doubted an abscess on the lung had broken, ye ken, an' gin that were sae, it couldna be but that death wad sune follow; sae I sent word to ye at ance, as ye had bidden me dae.'

'I am thankful that I was within reach, and could

come to you at once. Well! she is at rest, our poor, dear lassie! And we dare not mourn for that, for, young as she was, she had had sore times and a hard fight; and rest is sweet. But I feel for you; you will be lonely and the bairn will be an anxious charge for you.'

'I ken that; an' I wunna say but that whiles I'm terrible unfaithfu' i' my hert o' herts, an' get to wondering hoo the Lord will ever find the means to help me to thole the burden that seems too heavy for my auld back; but then again, there's whiles when I can just roll it upo' Him, an' leave it wi' Him. It's an especial mercy, is 't not, sir? that the bairn's not a woman-bairn, but a man-child, an' that he's strong an' hearty; ther's nae fears but that Tibbie, honest wuman, an' me will bring him up atween the twa o' us.'

'Nae fears, indeed! I feel sure the Lord will be your strength and stay; and what help Hamish and I can give you, you know you will get and welcome.'

'Aye, sir, I ken that weel, an' thank ye: gin it sall please the Lord that the bairn live, I'll mak' bold to ask ye to gie him a word o' gude counsel, seein' tae that he's yer name-son an' a'. His mither, puir body, was troubled i' her hert about him; she wouldna just say to me, dinna ye lat him grow up sic a ane as his father, ye ken; but she made it unco' plain to me that that was her meanin'. She said ower an' ower, wi' a pitifu' earnestness, "Dinna ye lat him tell a lee, or break his spoken word; learn him to be faithfu' an' true;"

an' eh ! think ye she didna' mind o' the lees upo' lees that yon chap, Ronald, would lat fa' as gin they were nae sin ava ? an' didna' she mind terrible weel how his spoken promise was as naething in his sicht, nae mair than chaff blawn by the wind ? Aye, aye, I'm very sure she minded a' that, puir lassie, and her hert yearned ower her bairn that he suldna' grow up like him ; an' ye'll help us, sir, to learn him to be leal an' true. I'm richt sure ye'll dae that.'

'Aye, will I, as far as lies in my power, my friend ; the king's name-son shall be worthy, please God, of the great royal name he bears.'

As Mr. Lindsay walked or rather ploughed his way home through the silent, snow-laden roads he said to himself, ' What a true hero David Hepburn is—a hero of whom the world knows nothing, nor will ever know anything, I suppose.'

Could the old clergyman have looked into futurity he would have been surprised by finding that the man whom he counted a hero is remembered indeed, but only as being the grandfather of him of whom the ancient borough of Ennerleddie boasts herself with pretty civic pride ; and yet, if patient courageous struggle against misfortune ; unselfish goodness, and full forgiveness of one who had wronged him constitute heroism, then David Hepburn deserves the title of hero as truly as does the grandson Stuart Alexander, who, but for his loving care, might never have grown up to be a glory to his native town.

## CHAPTER V.

STUART's early childhood passed as peacefully as his mother's had done, though with less of outward amusement and variety. As soon as he could safely run alone the whole house became to him one large playroom; the many empty chambers and little 'cells' (big cupboards, as he heard them called) he deemed especially delightful, and was not in the least awed by their stillness and gloom. Tibbie's kitchen he also loved, from different reasons, and spent much of his time therein, learning to be 'as handy as ony lassie,' the old woman would often triumphantly say. When he was six years old Tibbie taught him to read, using the identical 'hornbook' with which she had taught his mother, and soon after he was promoted to the dignity of having writing-lessons from his grandfather, who, as well as Tibbie, had long been in the habit of telling him stories in the winter evenings. Tibbie's indeed were chiefly drawn from fairy lore; his grandfather's from the Bible and family traditions—stories of the soldier chiefs of his mother's race, chieftains of their own name, and to whom they had been faithful retainers, equal because of the tie

of kinship, and yet willingly subservient, a bond which only true-born Celts can properly understand or realise. The old man told the boy of the Walter Hepburn who was a brave knight's squire at Bannockburn, and so won his spurs; of the Lord Hepburn who fell at Flodden; of the Master of Hepburn who followed 'the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee;' and last, not least, of the proscribed lord, the last baron under whom he himself, David Hepburn, had shed blood for the 'richtfu' king, the *only richtfu' king*, mind ye *that*, laddie!

The stories awoke and fostered in the boy the spirit of clanship and martial ardour to which he was fairly entitled, and his earnest desire was to be a soldier—a desire his grandfather could not discourage and yet dared not encourage; for 'alas,' as he said to himself, 'who was there now for whom to fight?'

As Stuart grew older most of his religious teaching came from Mr. Lindsay; this good man, who had never married (for one sufficient reason, if for no other, that he had never had means wherewith to support a wife), loved children, and showed his love by often gathering them round him for instruction in the highest and holiest truths, and in all such gatherings his 'name-son' was not likely to be omitted. To him he also taught other things: the boy having early shown an aptitude for acquiring languages,—picking up Gaelic from Hamish McBean, the one servant at the Parsonage, with wonderful celerity,—Mr. Lindsay gave him lessons in French, and assisted him in the Latin which he had to

prepare for the parish school, the one only school of the district. Stuart might have been a quick and in many respects a lovable pupil, but in the early years of his boyhood there was in him an immense love of fun and frolic that sometimes took the form of troublesome mischief. To this, as long as it was kept within bounds, neither his grandfather nor his clergyman was severe; but anything approaching to dishonesty in word or deed, or of unfaithfulness to a pledge given or to a required duty, met with stern rebuke, and what would be thought in these days hard punishment. Still both were so just and so impartially bestowed that they inspired no abject fear in the boy, and rather filled him, as they were intended to do, with contemptuous horror of the sins which had necessitated them.

When Stuart was about ten years old, a grave instance of the dreaded sin occurred; he deliberately and wilfully broke a promise which he had made to Tibbie—broke it only because fulfilling it would have interfered with temporary self-gratification; then, when Tibbie remonstrated, he at first treated the matter with flippant indifference, and afterwards began to make false excuses, in fact to say something very like the lie which with any degree of wilfulness or premeditation his lips had never yet uttered. Tibbie tearfully told her master, and he felt that an important moment had arrived, the value of which, if lost then, might never be regained. He told the boy of his father's habits of false speaking and of his unfaithfulness to his

trust, though even then the forgiving old man did not mention McRonald's sin against himself; he spoke of his dying mother's earnest prayer that he might not be allowed to be false or unfaithful, and then, with a heavy but unflinching heart, he punished Stuart more severely than he had ever been punished. The body and mind of the boy alike felt that the sin had been great. Furthermore he was advised by his grandfather to tell Mr. Lindsay what he had done; and never did he forget the wholesome shame and bitter discipline of that telling, but likewise he ever remembered the tender compassion with which the telling was received; not tender compassion only, there was honest indignation and stern rebuke also; for no one knew better than Mr. Lindsay how to blend mercy with judgment, tenderness with impressive severity. He bade the boy learn and often repeat the fifteenth Psalm, and in all his long after-life Stuart never saw or heard its fourth verse without recalling that day's experiences, and Mr. Lindsay's face, and words of 'honey mingled with fire;' and many a person at this present hour has reason to give thanks that he did thus surely learn that he who would ascend to 'the hill of the Lord' must, if he 'swear unto his neighbour, disappoint him not,' even 'though it be to his own hindrance.'

Stuart's thirteenth birthday was scarcely over when changes broke in upon his hitherto uneventful life—changes that brought sorrows in their train. The first was the death of Maister Dunlop, the woollen merchant and haberdasher who had bought

Hepburn's shop, and the passing of the business into the hands of distant relatives from a southern county, who brought their own full staff of assistants, and neither needed nor appreciated the aged foreman's necessarily feeble help; and a man of eighty-six was not likely to find any new employment. Even at his loom he could now work but slowly, and persons, who required or wished to have their orders quickly executed, gradually ceased to employ one who in that respect could not satisfy them; and had it not been for a small bequest from Maister Dunlop the little family at the 'Red House' would have sunk into absolute penury. Tibbie's keep was now a heavy drain upon Hepburn, yet he neither could nor would have turned her from his door, and indeed for the last few months of her life, her own scanty pittance was thrown into the common fund; but, grieved at heart for her master and friend, her health gradually gave way, and about a year after Mr. Dunlop's death, she also died, leaving Stuart almost inconsolable at the loss of the only mother he had ever known, and who had indeed, spite of age and feebleness, acted a mother's part to him. To his great surprise, for he did not then realise how bitter was their poverty and how hopeless would be their condition when Mr. Dunlop's money should have been all spent, his grandfather made no effort to replace Tibbie, but shut up more of the rooms, made a sitting-room of the front kitchen, and did the few domestic duties now required with the assistance of Stuart and of a widow



woman, a neighbour, who came in for an hour each morning.

The meals became daily more and more scanty, and Stuart, a healthy, growing lad, often felt himself very hungry. At last he ventured to ask his grandfather if there were need for this extreme carefulness and rigid economy. Hepburn, feeling that the boy was fully to be trusted, explained to him their exact condition, that showed him that at least for some months extra economy must be practised to pay for the expenses incident upon poor Tibbie's illness and death.

As the old man talked, Stuart noted his sunken cheeks, his pale lips, and bent and feeble frame, and recognising, with a sudden thrill of horror, that he did not have sufficient bodily nourishment, felt ashamed of his repinings at his own scanty supply of food. Almost from that hour the boy threw aside his boyishness, and the manhood within him began to dawn before its due time; he earnestly requested that he might be taken away from school, that 'the fees' might be saved, although, indeed, they were small, for it has long been the glory of Scotland that there a good education can be obtained at a moderate expense.

Unwillingly, Mr. Hepburn consented to Stuart's leaving the parish school, where he was an apt and ever-improving pupil; but he could not help feeling the few pence thus gained a comfort in his extreme need, and when, shortly after, Stuart obtained a situation as shop-boy in the one small bookseller's

shop, earning therein a trifling weekly payment, affairs certainly looked brighter; but the winter just then drawing on proved a bitter one, and Hepburn's aged, toil-weakened frame could not withstand its severity, and, after many manly efforts of resistance, he at last sank down in helpless sickness, that not only affected his body, but also darkened his mind. Stuart, afraid to leave him to himself, and unable to pay for the services of any competent attendant, was obliged to give up his situation in order to wait upon him; but he contrived to earn a little money by copying and by working at the loom, which latter, however, he could only do when his grandfather slept. The money remaining from Mr. Dunlop's legacy, and which was now, of course, in his hands, had dwindled almost to nothing, and he could not imagine how to procure the comforts which the old man's state absolutely needed; he could not sell the carved furniture, of which there was a good deal, and of the value of which he was aware, for it, like the house, was now the property of the eldest son of the last exiled Lord Hepburn, who had lent both to the retainer of his youth as a reward for disinterested services; and David Hepburn, on his marriage, had thought himself a happy man to have a partially furnished house, rent free, to live in. Nearly all the furniture that had belonged to himself, Hepburn had sold at the time when McRonald's act of forgery had compelled him to get money to pay the merchants with whom he dealt, and whom he had intended to pay with part

of the sums which his son-in-law had then stolen from him.

Many a time Stuart, not yet fifteen years old, felt driven to his wits' end, 'and his soul melting away because of the trouble.' Often his only meal in the day consisted of a plate of porridge\* but scantily supplied with milk; the pangs of hunger were hard to bear, and yet whenever he indulged in a little more food, he reproached himself with 'contemptible greediness,' and with a stern asceticism, that being unselfish was truly holy, turned away from the tempting white bread and the steaming broth which he made his grandfather eat.

The neighbours at last began to guess how matters stood, and to divine from Stuart's pallid cheeks and listless step how bitter was the poverty in the handsome old 'Red House' under the shadow of the Cathedral ruins; but although they pitied, they could do but little for him, for he never complained, and his bearing, though modest and respectful, had that dignified independence which makes it difficult for people who respect it to offer favours. The neighbours, being Scotch, understood an honest Scotch boy's shy, proud reticence, and dread of displaying to strange eyes, either temporal or mental troubles: even Mr. Lindsay did not for some time guess the half of the boy's sorrows; he was aware that he and his grandfather were poor,

\* At that period potatoes were but little cultivated in Scotland, and only in gardens as an article of luxury, and not of common ordinary agriculture as now.

but how poor he had had no idea until one afternoon on which he invited Stuart to go with him into his lodging and share his dinner. It was a simple meal—a roasted gigot of mutton, with baked potatoes, and a suet pudding, sparsely sprinkled with currants and raisins; but to Stuart it seemed a royal banquet, and he had to summon all his prematurely gained manliness to keep him from bursting into tears as a plate of the nice-smelling meat and browned crisp potatoes was put before him; he could not restrain his eagerness, and the first few mouthfuls were taken as only hungry people take food.

Mr. Lindsay furtively watched him, and began to understand that in good truth the boy was almost starving. Stuart could not eat all that had been given to him; like most persons who have been weakened by long abstinence from solid food, he soon turned with something like sick loathing from the meat. Perceiving this, Mr. Lindsay brought out his rarely used case bottle of whisky, and mixing a small quantity of the spirit with water, desired him to drink it; Stuart was unwilling, but, accustomed all his life to obey Mr. Lindsay, he took the potion, and tried not to make wry faces over it.

When Mr. Lindsay had seen a little colour make its way into Stuart's cheeks, and watched him eat some more food with relish, he said kindly—

‘Stuart, my man, I’m fearful that you have not attended enough to yourself, whilst taking care of

your grandfather. Let us see if I couldna help ye to manage better.'

'Eh! sir, if you could but help me—I'd be real thankfu'; it's maybe a' my ain blame; but I just canna contrive to get a' thing that grandfather needs, and pay up the siller that's owin' for Tibbie's buryin', and eneuch meat for mysel', wi' ten shillings a week; I canna mak' oot what way it gangs; but nae suner hae I the siller i' my hand, than it's gane like snaw i' the sunshine, though I dinna spend a bawbee to mysel'!'

The wistful look in the boy's upturned big blue eyes (true Celtic eyes) touched the old clergyman; the 'water stood in his own,' as he answered—

'You are but a young laddie to have such anxious thoughts and cares. I don't wonder that you are hungry; you should have told me of all this before; you might have trusted me. But one thing we can remedy at once; you must come every day at this hour and dine with me. I do not have meat every day,—only twice, or, at most, three times a week; but there's always kail brose, or barley broth, or dried salmon, and sometimes potatoes, more than enough for you and me; so that's settled, will you mind that?'

'Aye, sir, I'll mind, and thank you,' replied Stuart, the boyishness in him setting aside pride, and making him really thankful at the prospect of having one substantial and wholesome meal every day.

'But now,' continued Mr. Lindsay, 'we must try

and get you some more money; at the least, get help to pay off the rest of the debt for Tibbie's funeral; how much is't, my laddie?'

'Three-and-twenty shillins yet, sir; it was between five and six guineas; but we 've paid up the lave o't. I dinna see, though, *how* I'm to get mair siller; I canna earn muckle and notice grandfather tae; and I ken weel, *I winna seek* it frae ony body.'

'Maybe you will not; but I'm thinking that I will, my laddie.'

'Na, na, sir, dinna ye do that. I couldna thole to look onybody i' the face again, gin I sought siller that gate.'

'Whiles, folk maun seek siller, or starve,' replied Mr. Lindsay, using the homely vernacular, as he frequently did when speaking to the humbler members of his little congregation; then, relapsing into pure English, he added—'Gowanbraes is just expected to be coming in from India; and it would be quite seemly and fitting for me to ask *him* for help for you and your grandfather; and I'll do it, Stuart, as soon as I get word of his being in Scotland.'

Stuart was silent. Gowanbraes was the territorial appellation of Colonel Hepburn, the son of the chief to whom David Hepburn had done good service; he was their natural-born chieftain, the head of their clan, even their far-away kinsman; and thus it did not seem either wrong or shame-worthy to ask him for help.

Mr. Lindsay believed that Colonel Hepburn would ere long be at Gowanbraes, the only estate in Scotland still left to his family; it had belonged to his mother, the Lady Marjorie Hepburn, and had been part of her dowry—it, and the ‘Old Red House,’—and thus had been suffered to escape in the general confiscation of the Hepburn estates. Mr. Lindsay was, however, disappointed in his expectation; business kept the colonel from leaving India at the time he had mentioned as that of his probable sailing; stress of weather off the Cape further delayed him, and when he did arrive in Scotland his mother and his little daughter in Edinburgh had to be visited before he could get so far north as Ennerleddie, a journey to which town was not at that date, or indeed for many years later, to be lightly undertaken or easily accomplished; and, meanwhile, the waiting-time brought Stuart heavier trials than any he had yet endured.

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## CHAPTER VI.


ACCORDING to Mr. Lindsay's desire, Stuart now went every day to his house, and being naturally healthy and of a vigorous constitution, the abundant and wholesome food which he received soon restored him to his usual health both of body and mind. In the quaint imagery of the ever-fresh, ever-interesting *Pilgrim's Progress*, he had 'come to a little spot called Ease; but it was quickly passed over.'

One day about the close of this peaceful period Mr. Lindsay asked Stuart to come and spend that evening with him, to help in arranging and tying up some papers, and other matters which he wished to have sorted; and, in order that he might easily do so, he desired him to engage, at his expense, the kind neighbour-woman who occasionally helped at the 'Red House' to go in and watch over his grandfather, and attend to all requisite domestic duties.

Stuart was delighted at the invitation, and, having made himself as clean and tidy as much soap and water and the scantiness of his wardrobe would allow, he appeared in Mr. Lindsay's little sitting-room punctually at the hour of five, the time appointed for him to arrive, for in the north of Scotland



the February nights begin early and last long. The mirk and cold air of the outer world made the room, with its glowing red peat and wood fire and small oil lamp, seem the brighter, and even the faded tapestry curtain (its once ambitious design nearly lost in the mists of its age), drawn closely in front of the one high-set window, added to the air of cosy comfort; and there was something more than mere comfort there. A beautiful and rare painting or statue in the midst of homely surroundings, not only looks the more beautiful itself because of its contrast to the things around it, but also sheds a lustre upon them, drawing their plainness into its beauty; and if an inanimate object can have this power of beautifying as well as of being beautiful, in how much greater degree does it belong to any human being, out of whose material beauty of form and feature shines forth a living soul richly endowed with all things pure and honest, lovely and of good report? Mr. Lindsay had a presence that could be felt; it surrounded those who were within it like an atmosphere, and, beautiful in itself, it beautified every person and thing within its reach. Although now nearly seventy years old, his singularly tall figure, save for the forward pose of the head and neck, was still strong and upright, and in the worn, much-lined face the eyes still shone as with the glow of youth, and their piercing keenness was apt to startle offenders, until some call upon sympathy brought into their blue depths the exquisite tenderness, the self-forgetting kindliness, that once seen



were never forgotten. Unlike most of the clergymen of our suffering Church of Scotland, Mr. Lindsay was well, even nobly, born; but he never thought of his high breeding and hereditary refinement in any other light than as talents to be used, like all other gifts of whatever sort, in his Master's service. For that Master's sake, he had early *chosen* affliction with the people of God; poverty and persecution had been his lot; but wealth and promotion would have been his had he consented to give up his allegiance to his earthly king, and what he held to be his duty to his heavenly Father. He was fitted personally and mentally to shine in kings' palaces; yet the radiance of his presence never seemed brighter than when it was thrown upon the bed of sickness, the haunts of poverty, and the homes of sorrow.

Many a person, older and more highly cultured than Stuart, might well have envied him the pleasantness of that evening's occupation. Letters from distinguished names in Church and State were read to him—relics of the great leaders in the Stuart cause, even of 'the hope of the cause,' bonnie Prince Charlie himself, were shown to his delighted gaze; and delicious anecdotes, full of small life-like touches of description, and redolent of reality, as only the tales of actual eye-witnesses of the scenes described, or the actors in them, can be, were poured with pleasant ease into his attentive ear.

'Eh, sir, you had a terrible lot o' trouble and sorrow i' those days, you an' the other ministers!'

‘Yes, they were troublous, stirring times; but I for one would not have been without the training that they gave us: nothing else would have tested the reality of our principles, and proved whether we honestly loved our Church and our king better than worldly honour and personal ease; besides, amidst all the sorrow and anxiety, we had gleams of wonderful brightness, such as the touching kindnesses that we received from the poor and lowly, and the heroic fortitude displayed by noble women and even by little children; nay! the very dangers themselves were often romantic adventures, and had a spice of real fun in them.’

Stuart looked quickly up from a bundle of papers that he was tying together, and his kindling eye and smile showed that he fully understood what the brave old speaker meant. Mr. Lindsay, smiling back at him, said—

‘Ay, laddie, I’m thinking that you ought to be a soldier yourself.’

‘That is what I would like fine to be, sir, better than ony ither thing.’

‘Well, and why? Do you think that fighting is so delightful?’

‘Na, na, it’s not the fightin’; that’s only a pairt o’ the life o’ a soldier, and not a vera agreeable pairt: it’s the *life* I’m thinkin’ is grand.’

‘In what way is it so grand? Explain yourself.’

A little flush mounted into Stuart’s cheek, and he looked down; but still answered steadily—

‘A soldier doesna stand by himsel’; he’s ane o’

a regiment, pairt o' an army, it's like bein' in the Church itsel'; it's livin' under an earthly banner, just as ane lives under the heavenly banner; an' a soldier canna please himsel', an' he's nae left to his ain thochts; he has but to obey an' dae the wull o' his captain; nae his ain wull, an' a' *that's* grand, I'm thinkin'.'

Mr. Lindsay was touched, and, to tell the truth, a little surprised thus to learn how sorrow and responsibility had developed the mind and heart of the boy; but he was inclined to try him a little further.

'Yes, there's good truth in what you say; but isn't there something humiliating in not being able to have a will of one's own—in being obliged to obey like a mere machine?'

Stuart glanced up with surprise, and, with a little laugh in his voice, replied—

'It's not for onybody, gin he isna' a born natural, to be withoot a wull o's ain; nae captain *could* tak' that frae him, an' God *wouldna*; but a gude soldier can use his ain wull to make him follow his captain's wull, and to learn him not to obey like a mere machine, but as an honest man who kens weel what he's doing, an' sees the gude o't, or if he canna see the pint o't just at once, learn him to 'bide quaietly until sic time as it wull come oot plain till him.'

'With such feelings and thoughts as those, my boy, I wish much that you could be a soldier, but I don't see how you can be; you might enter the service of the French king, indeed, but there are

terrible drawbacks—unusual temptations in foreign life.’


Stuart, lowering his voice to the veriest whisper, but not his eyes, for they were intently fixed upon Mr. Lindsay, said—

‘Div ye not think sir, that *he*’ll come back, an’ let us fight for him ance mair?’

Mr. Lindsay’s face was inexpressibly sad as he replied, slowly and with effort—

‘Indeed, Stuart, I cannot rightly answer you in this matter. His Majesty, God bless him! seems to have given up all thought of striving to get back his ancient kingdom, and to have submitted himself to his exile; the gentleman who now fills the British throne is godly, kindly, and honest; his grandfather and great-grandfather have held it, and it may be that God intends that the house of Hanover should take the place of that of Stuart. In His own earliest kingdom, amongst His first chosen people, such changes of dynasty did happen, and that by His own manifest desire and appointment; perhaps so it will be with us.’

Stuart felt awed more by the manner of the speaker than by his words, and did not venture to press the subject. Mr. Lindsay could not tell the boy, indeed it is to be doubted whether he really acknowledged to himself, how bitterly and deeply Charles Edward Stuart had disappointed his faithful friends and followers, not merely by having allowed the defeat of Culloden to be the decisive ending of all attempts to attain to the throne of his



ancestors, but more by the nature of the life that he had since led, by the daily destruction of all the inherited manliness within him, and the habitual indulgence in those evil passions which had been such dark blots in the characters of too many of the royal house of Stuart; of men and women who, but for those blots, were indeed brave-natured, generous, and kindly-hearted, with a marvellous power and gift of attaching to their persons, as well as to their lawful cause, friends far superior to themselves in all virtue and godliness.

After a pause of silence, Mr. Lindsay said, in slightly hesitating tones—

‘Gowanbraes, your own natural chief and kinsman, has found soldier’s work in India, and though the East India Company is subservient in a certain sense to the British Government, and to Prince George of Hanover; yet to belong to its ranks is scarcely the same thing as being enrolled in one of his regiments in this country, and receiving pay directly from him; that, indeed, you could not do.’

‘Na, sir, I wouldna dae that.’

‘No, no, not as matters still stand. The time may come when circumstances will wear a different aspect. Our king and his brother may waive their claim—that would make your duty different; but anyhow, whatever may be the will of God on that head, there can at least be no doubt that our beloved Church has a happy and honourable future before her. I firmly believe that the day will come when she will be outwardly, as well as inwardly,


one with her sister Church in England, and on perfect equality with her in all things but wealth. Wherever your lot in life may be cast, Stuart, do not forget the Church of your baptism, the Church that, spite of her sufferings and her poverty, yet remains, and ever will remain, a witness to the truth, and a monument to the care of Him who has promised to continue with His own even until the end of the world.'

'Indeed, sir, I'm thinkin' I wunna forget: the thocht o' you an' grandfaither wull aye keep me mindfu'. But here, sir, are some bills and papers dated Rockhaven; if ye please, what wull I du wi' them? they're terrible auld an' yellow lookin'.'

'They may well be that; they date back since '48 and '49, when I was there for six months in the Tolbooth jail,—I and others of our ministers.'

'Eh! I mind noo o' grandfather tellin' me that they had putten you i' the jail; wunna ye tell me aboot, it, sir? I'm wondering hoo ye could thole sic' an affront as that.'

'It would have been ill to bear had I deserved it. I don't mean to say that the trouble and annoyance were not good for me, and well deserved by many shortcomings; but, viewed as a legal punishment, it was unjust and tyrannical. Ah! there was a different ruler in high places then from the one who sits there now; this is a Christian and a gentleman, a man with a knightly soul, although they tell me that his person is homely enough. Ever since men put him into the seat he occupies



he has shown plainly that he desires the peace of our Jerusalem, and that his best sympathies are with our suffering Zion; and I honour and love him for this.'

'But the time in the prison, sir, wunna ye tell me o' that?'

'Well, it was not a particularly pleasant time, you may be sure of that, laddie; the place was just the common jail, close down upon the shore, and my cell was damp with a damp that I feel whiles in my bones even now. We had but little money to buy ourselves better food than the prison fare; yet we had joys even in that dreary life. I can tell you of a bonnie sight that I saw more than once during those six months; and that was the baptism of the bairns of some of the faithful.'

Mr. Lindsay paused to give Stuart the chance to ask the question which he saw was trembling on his lips.

'Eh, sir, hoo culd that be, seein' ye were'na allowed to haud services i' yer vera ain dwellin'-hooses; surely ye couldna get leave to baptize bairnies i' the jail itsel', under the vera een of the ill-doin' folk!'

'It does not sound likely, does it? Nay, but there's an old proverb that love *will* find out a way; and another that love laughs at locksmiths; so, surely, what is true of the lesser and lower love of a man's heart may well be true of its highest and noblest emotion. The poor and lowly mothers, the fishwives of the district, found out a way to



obtain the blessing, and laughed at prison bolts and bars. One evening in the gloaming, I was sitting near the window of my cell catching the last rays of light to finish some particular bit of reading, when I heard a scratching on the thick glass outside the closely grated bars, and looking down I saw a woman's hand. I rose at once, and found that, standing on tip-toe on one of the slippery weed-covered rocks lately left bare by the receding tide, was a young fishwife. I should have told you that my cell was one of those in the lowest story, and the woman being tall, could just manage to touch the window. I opened the little door of coarse greenish glass, and said, "Good even to ye, mistress." I fancied that, like many of our kind folk, she was bringing me a little present of fish or maybe eggs.

"Whisht, sir!" replied the young woman; "wull ye please haud yer heid down a wee bittie lower, for I daurna speak ower loud."

'I bent down as low as I could, but my head and throat were all that could be passed through the narrow middle opening of the iron bars. Great indeed I confess was my surprise at the next words I heard.

"Please, sir; I hae my bairnie here wi' me; it's a wee bit lassikie, an' she's my first, an' I'm seekin' baptism for her; eh, sir, wunna ye christen her for me?"

'I cannot describe the joy that rushed into my heart. Now, indeed, I felt sure that the Lord was

remembering His own, and that His promise was sure. As soon as I could speak, I said, "Wullna I, gude mistress, ay wull I wi' a' my hert, an' I thank the Lord for giving me this work to do for Him. Where's your bairn? is't in yer creel?"

"Ay, I brocht her i' the creel for I've traivelled mair than saxteen mile the day, an' I'll just lay her on the top o't an' fasten her siccar, an' haud it up sae that ye can easy sprinkle the water upo' her broo."

'In a moment more I had filled a bowl with water, and placed it on the window-seat, against which I leant as I whispered a few prayers; the bowl was right common, and the prayers could be but few. You may be sure though that I did not leave out the Gospel. I *could* not have omitted that; those always beautiful words seemed to bear a new beauty that night. The tallness of the young mother, and my own length of arm, allowed me not only to drop the water on the bairnie's brow, but also to make on it the holy sign which never had seemed dearer, nor a more glorious banner under which to fight, than it seemed then. That done, we breathed more freely, and ventured on a few words of talk, for a babe and the creel could tell no tales, and, as I have said, the woman frequently came to us with various small presents. She told me about her "man at hame wha' had been richt willin' that she suld come, though some fearfur o' hairm happening till her," and of other matters; and then we parted, never to meet again,

I suppose, in this world ; but I heard of her often, for other women came to beg a similar blessing for their little ones, and all of them named her, Elizabeth Alexander, as being the person "wha had pit it intill their heads to come." Blessed woman, she did indeed make a holy use of her natural woman wit and quickness of expedient. I doubt not but that her reward will be great in that day when the Lord shall make up his jewels.'

'Eh, sir, an' will ye not be richt glad to see her again i' that day?' said Stuart, who had listened to the story with deep attention.

Mr. Lindsay smiled. 'It will be one of its many joys, laddie, if only I may be found worthy to enter into such ; but now let this story remind you that even prison life may have its gleams of brightness and its moments of gladness.'

'Aye, sir, I hope I'll mind o't, if troubles come to me that are not my ain blame.'

'But, Stuart, even troubles that come to us by our own fault, which are the very consequences of our sins, may yet have some brightness if they lead us to see the sins and to repent of them. You have seen raindrops sparkle in the sunlight and take bonnie colours to themselves ; and in like manner the tears of repentance may be turned into a very rainbow of hope if the light of *love*, the love of God, shine upon them and through them. I say this to you, laddie, because the world—ay, and godly men too—are apt to be hard upon folk who have brought trouble upon themselves, as the

saying is, and to forget that the very fact of the ill-doing having brought punishment and trial is a proof that God is still dealing with those who have thus done ill, and that the only irremediable curse, that of being let alone by God, left to themselves, has not fallen upon them. If ever, in the days that are to come, you find yourself being punished and tried, and know why you are punished, turn to God with thanksgiving that He still regards you as His child, still loves you enough to chasten you for your good.'

For answer, Stuart made a gesture of respectful acquiescence, and Mr. Lindsay was satisfied; for he was one who neither expected nor greatly liked young people, boys especially, to be communicative as to their deepest and best feelings. He now changed the conversation, saying, in lighter tones, 'Have you found anything else amongst those things that you feel curious about, and would care to hear the history of?'


'Yes, sir. Wull ye please tell me what was the use o' this bonnie baggie o' pink silk, a' covered ower wi' siller chains? It looks as gin it had been some lady's.'

Mr. Lindsay took it from Stuart's hand with a sweet sad smile, as drawing out the tiny, delicate silver threads by which the little bag was opened and shut, he answered, 'And so it was, laddie. It belonged to my mother; but first to my aunt, Lady Balhaines, to whom it was given by no less a person than his late Majesty's honoured mother, good

Queen Mary Beatrice. Are you not favoured to have handled something that was once actually in the hands of that long-suffering, patient, and exemplary wife and mother ?’

‘Ay, ’deed am I!’ replied Stuart, who had evidently been given his Christian name to some purpose. ‘And why, sir, did she give it to Lady Balhaines, an’ when ; wull ye please tell me ?’

‘Yes, you shall hear. Before James the Seventh came to the throne, when he was Duke of York, he and his Duchess were for some time in Scotland, living chiefly at Holyrood, and making themselves popular with all who were privileged to be in their presence. My uncle, who early succeeded to our family title of Balhaines, and his younger brother, my father, who both afterwards gave their lives to their king and country at Sheriffmuir when I was just one month old, were, at the time of the Duke’s visit, in his suite, and holding office in his court ; and during that period my uncle married the Lady Elspeth Carmichael, the elder sister of the little girl who ten or twelve years later married his brother, my father. The Duchess kindly took a great interest in the wedding, and honoured it with her presence, giving to the bride, amongst other gifts, this purse, which was worked in those delicate silver rings by one of her own ladies. It was used by the bride to receive the coins of differing values which, according to a custom then prevalent in England, the bridegroom presented to her at that part of the wedding ceremony where the husband



promises to endow his wife with all his worldly goods. This purse was hung from my aunt's waist, in readiness to receive the coins, by the gracious Duchess herself, and was an object of admiration to her baby bridesmaid, Lillias, to whom, on her marriage with my father twelve years later, my aunt gave it, loyally believing that she could offer scarcely anything more valuable. It is almost the only relic of my mother which I possess; for I was born, as I have told you, one month after Sheriffmuir, in which my father fell; and at her death eleven years later, and in our troubles and poverty, we became a scattered family—some of us are in France, one in America. I shall leave this purse to my niece, Mrs. Angus, who lives near Edinburgh, and is god-mother to your Colonel Hepburn's little daughter, a child in whom I feel a deep interest. I am told that she is singularly beautiful and charming, and quite a wise-like wifie, although only six years old. You know, of course, that the Hepburns and my family are connected?’

‘Yes, sir, I’ve heard grandfather say that they were friends of yours.’

‘Near friends too. My mother’s mother was own sister to the last baron, the Colonel’s father; so you see you had a right to be my name-son, for we are kin.’

‘I’m richt prood o’ that, sir; but I’m fearin’ it’s some far off, the kinship atween you an’ me.’

‘Not just so very far. I have known persons more distantly connected than we are claim kinship.

You know that we Scotch are laughed at in other countries for counting kindred with far-away cousins; but I don't think it's an ill thing, this natural affection and reverence for ties of blood.'

'Maybe no', sir, when sic a ane as *you* are kind eneuch to claim kinship wi' ane like me; but gin *I* was to mak' bauld to count cousinship wi' you and the Colonel, I'm doubtin' it wouldna' be just sae weel.'

Mr. Lindsay was not ill pleased with the spirit of this speech, yet he wisely thought it necessary to say, somewhat gravely, 'Take care, my laddie, that honest self-dependence doesn't lead you into the sins of pride and of stifling natural affections, just for fear folk might think you were running after great people. But I was going to tell you that Hamish and I have frequently remarked that there is more of personal likeness in you to me than we have noticed in my very own nephews and nieces.'

At that moment Hamish McBean came into the room to spread the table for supper, and, hearing what his master was saying, interposed his word, as was his wont in that homely little household of two.

'Ay, we will often haf been sayin' that—the minister an' me. It will be his eyes and the shape of his brow that you will haf; and it will be you that will be proud of the likeness.'

'Deed am I, Maister Hamish, though I canna' say that I can see it mysel'.'

Hamish McBean was as remarkable a man in his

way as his master was in his: his hair, which he kept unusually long, and tied with a black ribbon (in imitation of Mr. Lindsay, who did not wear a wig, but who so far conformed to the fashion in hairdressing of the day), was snow white, although he was barely sixty years old. He was born in France, at St. Germain, whither his father had fled after Sheriffmuir with some of the Hepburns; and his mother was a Frenchwoman. He had been wounded at Culloden when not quite twenty, and, disabled by the nature of his wound from further active service, he had attached himself to Mr. Lindsay, who had tended him as he did others after that fateful battle to most of which he had been an eye-witness—being ready, in disguise, to offer his priestly help to the members of his own Church in need thereof.

Hamish followed his master, whom he passionately loved, in all his wanderings, and had lodged in Rockhaven during the time of his imprisonment, walking every day on the shore that he might see him at his window, and seize every chance of speaking to him. When Mr. Lindsay finally, after occasional visits to the place, settled down in charge of the Ennerleddie congregation, Hamish came also to be his sole domestic and personal attendant; for he could cook and clean the house as skilfully as any woman, and also could perform the duties of a valet, rejoicing in keeping his dear master in that state of beautiful neatness and refined elegance which always characterised even his



shabbiest clothes; but his so coming had been one of the greatest proofs of his love, for his nature and early habits alike led him to hate a settled life; and especially he hated that the settlement should be in a county in which the Doric Scotch, a tongue he neither liked nor quite understood, was alone spoken, and in which the Highlanders proper, the pure Celts, were objects of dread and aversion. Naturally, he had not made many friends in the place, Maister David Hepburn and Stuart being his only intimate associates; of the latter he was singularly fond, probably from that strange, subtle likeness to his master which he had been the first to discover; and, in order not to be annoyed by his Scotch tongue, he had taught him Gaelic and French, either of which was easier to Stuart than the 'high English' which Hamish was always urging him to acquire, unaware that he himself never spoke English without using Gaelic and foreign idioms, although his accent in speaking it was as delicately pure as that of Inverness-shire people in general. There was a grand supper spread that night; Hamish had stewed a fowl after some fashion learned in his childhood from his French mother; it, and cheese and 'cakes,' a small pat of fresh butter, with milk for the boy, and whisky and water for the minister, made a sumptuous meal in the opinion of those simple people; for in each of them, minister, boy, and serving man, there was an almost childlike simplicity combined with great natural shrewdness and sound judgment.

When the supper, with all its bright talk, in which Hamish, standing behind Mr. Lindsay's chair, took his full share, was over, the hour was somewhat late, and Stuart had to hasten home; and he felt, as he went, that he would ever remember the pleasantness of that evening.

One day, about a week later, Stuart, perceiving that his grandfather was not so well as usual, felt reluctant to leave him for even the short time which eating his dinner at Mr. Lindsay's house would occupy, and therefore he ran to the Parsonage to beg to be excused from dining there that day. The door was opened to him by Hamish, dressed in his bonnet and scarf ready for going out, and who said, immediately on seeing him—

'I will be afraid that I canna be giffing you your dinner this day, for the minister will not be well, and I will be bidding him keep in his bed. I will be going out for two minutes to buy him a little tea, which he will haf a fancy for; a strange kind of a drink it will be to haf a fancy for, when one might be getting the best of fine coffee; but his mother was taught the fashion of drinking it by one who had the good right to set any fashion; and he will always be wishing for it whenever he will not be ferry well; and I see he will be getting it, the poor dear gentleman.'

'What's wrang wi' Maister Lindsay?'

'Oh! he will just haf taken a terrible cold with being out yesterday away up to Glenleddie seeing Margaret Souttar, the creature! and the rain, and

the snow, and the wind, they did all come together all the day through: there will be nothing else wrong with him, and I will be thinking that he will be his own self again to-morrow.'

'Wull I rin an' get the tea till ye, an' then ye needna' gang awa' frae the minister?'

'Well, and I will be thinking that will be a ferry goot offer; and it will always be a ferry considerate laddie that you will be. You will be buying me two ounces of the tea and a quarter of a pound of the loaf sugar; and here will be four shillings which will be paying for them; and you will buy them at Sandy Davidson's, if you will be pleased.'

Stuart speedily executed the little commission, and then hastened back to his grandfather, attendance upon whom kept him fully occupied for the remainder of that day and the following, which was Saturday.

## CHAPTER VII.


ON the Sunday following, the minister was unable to appear in his wonted place in the little humble 'chapel,' literally an 'upper room,' wherein he and his small flock often enjoyed true rest, and joined together in worship more full and fervid, and beautiful in its loving devotion, than the merely fashionable attendants upon the ornate services of splendid modern churches would be willing to believe it was possible could have arisen in a room so humble and bare of all material beauty, and in itself so wanting in all that could charm and please the outward senses. There are some people who cannot realise that it is possible to 'have nothing, and yet to possess all things;' but many of those white-haired shepherds, comely country lasses, ancient widows and mothers of small merchants, retired captains of coasting vessels, and hardy fisher folk, who worshipped in that bare, white-washed, tiny-windowed room, understood the Apostle's words. They were men and women who, by their worshipping there at all, entailed upon themselves much real self-denial, and painful physical exertion (for many had to walk long distances), much self-repression, and not a little of the world's contumely and

ill-will; nevertheless they would have said cheerfully and heartily that having nothing, they yet 'possessed all things.'

To a congregation such as this the absence of their minister and the loss of a service were real griefs; and although he sent them a kindly loving message, which Hamish McBean delivered in hushed tones within the doorway, their hearts were heavy within them as they turned away, and commenced what was to many of them a long, wearying homeward walk. Stuart, on his return to the 'Red House,' tried to make his grandfather understand what had happened; but the aged man had passed so far beyond the knowledge of all earthly things, that this event, which only a few months before would have stirred him deeply, now awoke no gleam of interest, or even of comprehension.

A strange sense of desolation crept into Stuart's heart as he sat by his grandfather's bed through that curiously long Sunday; he did not understand the sensation, for he was too thoroughly a boy to be given to self-analysis and introspection, yet he could not help fearing that some heavy trouble was at hand; but whenever the fear renewed itself in his mind, he shook himself in impatient irritation at the unwonted feeling.

About ten o'clock the next morning, he went to the parsonage, and knocked gently at the outer door. Receiving no answer, he ventured, as he had often done before, to lift the latch, and step into the little lobby. All seemed still and quiet with what



immediately struck him as an uncanny stillness. He looked into the kitchen and the one sitting-room; there was no one in either, and whilst hesitating as to whether to ascend the short, steep stair leading to the two attic rooms, he caught sight of Hamish sitting on the topmost step, his head buried in his hands, and his whole frame shaking with suppressed voiceless agitation. In a moment he was by his side whispering, 'What's wrang? what's wrang wi' ye, Maister Hamish? for Gude's sake tell me!'

Stuart never forgot the face that the old man lifted to his; it was so bloodless that even the snowy beard seemed less white, and it was full of awe that could not be called fear. One bony, trembling hand he laid upon Stuart's arm, with the other he pointed to the room behind him, and in tones that sounded hollow and far away, he said—

'He will be lying there, my laddie, and it will be nefer that he will speak to us any more; nefer again that he will say to me, "*Bon jour, mon ami*," as he will haf been doing *effery* morning, because he knew that old Hamish will haf loffed the tongue of his mother; and Stuart, it wass when he wass all alone; it will be that which will be tearing my heart, that I will haf left him; he will haf said to me that he wass better, he wass, and that I wass to go to my bed, and to sleep; and it was to sleep I will haf gone, like a selfish old beast; but he wass not sleeping; the thought of that will be ferry, ferry bitter to old Hamish; he went away, with his eyes,

his great, beautiful eyes all open, and he had not Hamish there to put his arm around him, and to say, "Be of good courage, my comrade and master, my father and friend." Ochone! Ochone.'

One of Stuart's hands was still in Hamish's, but with the other he tightly pressed his throat to keep down the rising sobs. Though quite understanding the Franco-Celt's hazy, dreamy talk, and too fully believing the truth of his story, he yet, like most of us in similar circumstances of sudden sorrow, found a pitiful comfort in saying over and over again, 'It canna be true, it canna be true. It's no real; it's only a dream!'

At last, the meaning of these oft-repeated words penetrated into Hamish's brain, and getting up with difficulty from his low, crouching attitude, he said—

'Come in then, with me, my friend, and you will see all too well that it will be no dream that I will haf been telling to you. I will haf dressed him in his white robes, and will haf made him as a ferry pretty picture to look upon; and you will haf no fear in seeing him.'

With lowly-bowed head, and down-dropped eyes, Stuart suffered himself to be led—for only the second time in his young life—into the presence of death. The room was small, low-roofed, scantily-furnished, and carpetless, but even now, though the light of life had fled from his eyes, Mr. Lindsay's presence still seemed to fill it, and to make its poverty rich. It was indeed a fair picture to which

Hamish led the boy, who, after the first timid glance, felt no longer afraid; but as if he could never satisfy himself with looking. All marks of toil and hardship, disappointment and pain, had gone out of the face for ever, and the peace of God's giving—which, indeed, had always been there, but which had been somewhat shadowed by those other marks, also of God's giving—now shone forth in all its ineffable beauty. The silver-threaded hair, which had never been straight, but that had rippled itself away into little curls, was now brushed back, so as to form almost a halo above the large, noble brow, the full size of which its luxuriance had formerly concealed. The shapely, beautiful hands, in which their owner had felt a little innocent pride and pleasure, because they were inherited, 'family hands,' were folded across his breast, and within them (their fair heads rising above them), were a half-opened Christmas rose, two or three snowdrops, a blue hepatica, and a tiny spray of red-berried holly, all bound together with a bit of vividly blue ribbon, which Hamish had taken from the small store of streamers wherewith he loved to adorn his 'pipes, pipes which had been seldom played except when he had accompanied his master on some long country walk—for Ennerleddie, although on the confines of Highland counties, was not in any sense a Highland town, nor had the majority of its inhabitants any great love for the natives of the mountainous wilds, people differing greatly from themselves in most of their characteristics.



Hamish touched the little knot of flowers tenderly, and said—

‘He wass one who will often haf been speaking to me of what he will haf called the meanings of the colours. They will haf had words and thoughts for him, the colours will haf had. He will haf said to me, “The blue will be speaking of Heaven and the clearness of God’s Truth; and the green will be telling me of the love of the good God, the one only love which will always be young and always fresh, although it will haf always been old; and the red colour will be bringing to my mind the fiery, burning zeal of the martyrs, and the Precious Blood of the dear and holy Jesus.” All these so beautiful words he will haf said to me when we will haf been alone, he and me, in the hills and the glens, when he will haf looked at the flowers with the many colours, or at the sky when the sun will haf been setting; and so, Stuart, you will see that I will haf giffen them to him, the red and the green, the blue and the white.’

‘Ay, I’ve heard him speak sic words mysel’,’ replied Stuart, his eyes still fixed on the dear, calm face, and each minute learning some new lesson from the gaze.

‘That will I well pelieve,’ said Hamish; ‘for he will always haf been saying the good words to all people; and to you whom he will haf loffed much, without doubt he will haf spoken often, and you will now be making a treasure of all that he will haf said to you. For me, effery thing will be to

me a memory of him; there will be nothing that will not haf a voice, and it will be his voice that will be in effery thing.'

The plaintive tone of the speaker, even more than his words, brought the tears into Stuart's eyes—tears that now could not be repressed. The large drops fell quickly and heavily, and he did not attempt to conceal them. The sight of them broke down Hamish's unnatural calmness. With the wild cry of his race, and all the Celtic vehemence, he threw himself upon the ground beside his beloved dead, and his tears—fiery, passionate tears—rained down upon the beautiful hands that were already cold and beginning to take the marble stiffness. If Stuart could before have persuaded himself that the minister was not dead, but only sleeping a peaceful sleep, now he would have been all too sure that he was indeed dead, else would he never have been deaf to those bitter cries—else would not the hands which had ever been about the Father's business have kept their cold, regardless clasp through all that baptism of tears; yet although this fact came home with keen reality to the boy, he felt that the true self—the *very man* whom they so loved, and who loved them—was with them still, that his presence remained with them. There was something more than a memory, there was reality of possession; there was that mystic communion of the saints in which, day by day, we profess our belief, and which yet we rarely realise as we might do, and ought to do, to our

great and endless comfort. That article of the Christian creed came home with its own most blessed note of certain truth to Stuart's heart as he knelt by Mr. Lindsay's dead body; and never, throughout his long after life, did he lose the echo of that most music-full note; he never heard or said those words without the music first heard on that day coming with them—the music of undoubting faith, of realisation that 'the saints above and saints below but one communion make.'

Hamish was not just then realising this glorious truth; he was crying aloud out of the emptiness of his heart, using the most pathetic idioms of both his fatherland and his mother-tongue, in his passionate yearning to hear his master's voice again, once more to see his master's smile and sun himself in its radiance. That smile was indeed a thing to be missed, and the Celtic nature is keenly sensitive to things missed, and craves pathetically for that which has been taken away from the bodily eye, not always able to realise that when a joy or a blessing has been drawn up into the regions beyond earthly ken, it becomes thenceforth an inalienable possession.

'Why, oh why will it haf been that thou wilt haf been taken away when it will be efferybody that will mourn for thee, and be full of sorrow without thee, and I, who will be of no falue at all to anybody—I, who will not be any one at all in the world, will haf been left? What will I do without you, my master, my friend? What will Hamish

do when he will hef to lif in the dark alone, all alone?’

These words roused Stuart. He felt that he must endeavour to give some comfort; and, with that rare tact and thoughtfulness for which he was afterwards so distinguished, already dawning in him, he talked in the poor old man’s native tongue. At first a little stiffly, but gathering ease as he went on, and after a while, his kindly suggestions of consolation because of their kindliness, simple though they were, had their wished-for effect. Hamish’s sobs grew less violent, his tears less passionate, and at last, raising his head and catching Stuart’s hand, he exclaimed, also in French—

‘But thou art very blessed, my child, for thou hast said good words to me, and taught me to remember that our friend is in the happiness of the good God. Ah! he was fery, fery tired, and men—evil men—had given him much grief and pain; but now he will nefer again be tired and will have no more grief or pain, and I will not be selfish enough to wish to have him back. I will be glad for him, as thou hast told me to be. Yes, I will be glad that he will have no more long and weary walks and be fery tired; I will be glad that he will get no more letters with the sad news about the dear king who does not lif the life that he would have had him live; that he will no more haff any trouble and pain. Yes, I give thanks unto the good God for him that he is at rest. And now wilt thou come away with me, for I must ask thee to do some work for me that I

cannot do myself, and there is no one whom I can trust as well as I can thee?’

Stuart lingered an instant to press his lips upon the folded hands, and almost unconsciously (like an inspiration) arose in his heart the thought, that was half a prayer—May I do something, some day, worthy of the blessing of having known such a friend as this! That thought was the embryo of the vow, the making and keeping of which ennobled Stuart’s life, giving him higher rank than any mere patent of nobility could have bestowed upon him.

‘I dinna like to leave him his lane,’ Stuart said wistfully, as he and Hamish turned away from the room where Death held his stately court.

‘It will not be Hamish that will be leafing him long alone. No, no, my friend, it will be Hamish that will stay with him; but his dear, quiet body will be now in the arms of the angels. You and I will not be seeing them; but they will be there, and they will be making a soft, white bed for him with their wings.’

Stuart found that Hamish wished him to go and inform the nearest of the neighbouring clergymen of Mr. Lindsay’s death, and ask him to come on the following Friday and conduct the funeral ceremony. There were at that period, the year 1785, only four Episcopalian clergymen in the large diocese in which Ennerleddie was situated, and Stuart knew that the nearest of these lived more than fifteen miles away, and the prospect of the walk in the raw cold and damp of February, with all its other

difficulties and dangers, was not pleasant even to the naturally courageous boy, because he was not physically strong enough for it; but no word of this shrinking feeling did he express. He arranged to set off about ten o'clock the next day, if the services of the widow woman could be procured for the day and the ensuing night, which of course he must spend in Donaldstown, at the parsonage.

Other work Stuart had to do that forenoon—work which tried him sorely, for it was that of giving orders in Hamish's name for the making of the coffin, also that of taking the sad news to such members of the congregation as lived in Ennerleddie, and of writing to some of Mr. Lindsay's relations. When night came he was too tired and excited to settle quietly to sleep. He could not understand why he could not rest, but knowing how much sleep was needed to enable him to go through the fatigues of the coming day, he got out of bed, and having noiselessly stirred the smouldering peat fire into a little ruddy blaze, he endeavoured by its light to read, choosing, at random, one of a small parcel of books which, on that delightful evening spent at his house, Mr. Lindsay had given him for his own possession. He little guessed, as he drew forth the thin, brown volume, dingy-looking as nearly all books of that day were, how greatly its contents would influence his whole after life and the lives of many of his country people yet unborn.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE book which Stuart took up that night was a small thin volume containing only a few pages of letter-press, and various quaint wood-cuts. It was a brief account of the 'Life of ane Maister George Heriot, and the Foundation of his Hospital.'

The language was stilted, and the spelling strange; but there was much of warm, living interest in it; there was the genuine ring of reality which awoke a resonant echo in the heart of the young reader, straining his blue eyes over the crabbed printing. He knew something, poor laddie, of the pains of poverty, and the sorrow of having the day of youth prematurely clouded by the cares and anxieties of age. In feeling pity for himself, he felt more pity for others who were more entirely helpless and friendless than himself. There would always be many poor, homeless boys and girls, and his heart ached for them. Why could he not some day be able to do something to help and succour them? something after the pattern of Heriot's noble work? but with this question came a sort of amused wonder at himself. How could he ever possibly earn enough money for the carrying out of such a design? Still

the beauty of the design made stronger and stronger appeals to his imagination. Would it not be great joy to be able to help boys with no means of obtaining a livelihood—boys, like himself, without parents? At that moment his grandfather groaned in his sleep, and Stuart recalling the hardships and troubles that had beset his old age, thought that he would like to help, not only the young, but also the aged; to be able to lessen the sorrows and cares of the aged poor. If ever he should found a charitable institution, it should embrace both objects—the relief of aged men and women who could no longer work, and would not beg; and the education and establishment in life of orphan boys and girls. And he stared at the wood-cut of Heriot's picturesque hospital until it seemed a real building that he himself had erected.

The sudden dying out of the last glimmer of fire-light had brought back his senses to his present condition; and both smiling at the folly of his dreams, and sighing that they could only be 'the baseless fabrics of a vision,' he again got into bed, and this time slept so soundly that he never stirred until, when day had fully begun, he was awakened by his grandfather's feeble entreaties for some drink. Before he had properly attended to the old man's wants, dressed himself in his Sunday best, and made and swallowed down his own porridge, it was nearly eleven o'clock, and he hastened to set off for Donaldstown. The road presented many changes—now ascending a hill, now going down



some deep descent, now passing through a wooded deeply-cut valley, or more properly 'den'; and now crossing a bit of wild bleak moorland, leading sometimes by the side of solitary fields, and occasionally passing through a small village. In the second of these, Stuart halted to take half-an-hour's rest in a small, clean cottage, the tiny front window of which displayed a goodly store of freshly-baked 'cakes' and bannocks, also *claggam*, that ductile dainty dear to Scottish bairns, and a few rosy apples, polished into shining smoothness. Stuart bought a bannock, and was given, by the kindly-faced mistress of the shop, a stoup of sweet fresh milk. As he ate and drank this simple wholesome fare, he looked at the apples (he was not yet fifteen), and his heart went out to them; it was long since he had tasted any, and these were particularly large, and round, and rosy. At last he asked their price, and was told that he could get two for a penny. He took out the little leather bag which served him for a purse, and, after counting over its small store of coins carefully, hesitatingly put down one penny on the counter, took up the apples that the woman smilingly held out to him, said good-bye, and set forth again on his walk.

Already (as long years afterwards he expressed himself in telling the story to his dearest friend), 'the apples had become as lead in his hand.' When every penny was precious, and needed to help in buying absolute necessities for his aged, suffering

grandfather, that he should have spent one in the mere gratification of self, seemed to him almost, if not altogether, a sin. Would Mr. Lindsay ever have been guilty of such a selfish, greedy action? he asked himself with a flush of bitter shame reddening his pale, thin cheek. Was this the way to save money in order to do good to other people? Where were all the fine dreams and schemes of last night? Truly *he* was not of the stuff of which the founders of great charities are made; but in the midst of these bitter, hard thoughts, came, like a ray of light, the remembrance of a lesson which Mr. Lindsay had often impressed upon him, and all the young people under his charge, that failure in duty, and even actual sins, if truly repented of, may be made stepping-stones to the attainment of virtue; and that a man can always be 'in the future what he might have been in the past.' Remembering these lessons, Stuart resolved, not with the lightness which can never create a noble future out of an ignoble past, but with deep humility and grave steadfastness of purpose, that he would henceforth make it his endeavour never to spend even a penny upon his own mere personal gratification, apart from the comfort or pleasure of others. The very resolve, not being a meaningless shift to get out of a difficulty, but the honest purpose of one who knew what a resolution meant, and how rigidly it should be kept, gave him some present comfort, only there remained the doubt what to do with the apples. He was too sensible to think of throwing

them away, yet it was with much hesitation that he began eating the smaller, and less pretty-looking of the two, which nevertheless he could not help finding pleasant to the taste, and it did him good, for his hunger had not been quite satisfied by the one bannock and the small wooden bowl of milk. As he was finishing the last morsel, he was met by a woman with a plaid over her head, and a tall boy in kilts (the Fraser colours), who walked with a slouching, strange gait, and who, to Stuart's surprise, made a sudden dart across the narrow road, snatched the remaining apple from his left hand, and instantly began munching it with greedy, delighted looks. In the next second the woman was by his side, exclaiming, 'Oh you will pe pleased to pardon him, for he will pe an innocent, and will not pe knowing that it will be a ferry wrong pad thing that he will pe doing; for he will pe loffing an apple more and petter, oh much petter than all other things!'

'Poor boy,' said Stuart, full of compassion, and speaking in Gaelic, 'he is quite welcome to the apple, only I couldn't think at first what he was doing.'

The Highland woman, a Fraser from the neighbouring county of Inverness, on hearing her native language spoken by this Lowland-dressed youth, was overjoyed, and poured forth a volley of thanks from which Stuart found it difficult to get away. As it was, he was not allowed to proceed until he had accepted a thick, triangular-shaped, piece of

'cake,' a lump of ewe-milk cheese, and three eggs, which latter he took with grateful pleasure, and carefully stowed in a deep pocket, prizing them as dainties for his grandfather's supper and breakfast. It may be said that after that little episode, Stuart went on his way rejoicing. Was it because he had been really sorry for his selfishness that manifest good had been allowed to come out of evil? He never could, even when older and wiser, put the feeling into words, yet he then and ever felt that God had actually helped him individually on this occasion, and given him a sure sign of forgiveness.

Speculations as to the history of that poor 'innocent' in the kilts (a dress to which his own hereditary inclinations had often longingly turned), occupied his mind during the remaining part of the walk, which, diversified by no other adventure, came to an end between five and six in the evening when the fast fading daylight was struggling feebly with the gradually increasing brightness of moonlight. Stuart went straight to the house of the Episcopal clergyman, a different person in most outward characteristics from him who had hitherto been his only embodiment of the ministerial office. Mr. McTavish was not a man of intellectual power and high mental culture, nor refined in act and word as Mr. Lindsay had been; but he had good judgment, practical common sense, and untiring energy in promoting the cause which he believed to be the cause of God. In person, he was of that middle height which is well fitted for active work;

broad-shouldered, and substantial in face and figure, he looked the picture of health; his hearty laugh was a pleasant sound to hear, and there was something infectious in the genuine mirth of his dancing bright eyes; but they were beautifully pathetic and kindly, when the troubles of other persons made them take a dewy melting look, like that often to be seen in the eyes of a high-bred dog; and his large full voice could tone itself down to tender gentleness when speaking to the sick or the sorrowful. His wife was admirably suited to be his companion—a hearty, cheery, homely body, wise in all the mysteries of good housewifery, keeping her husband, her four children and herself, and a stout serving-maid, in modest comfort upon an income with which some women, even in those days, would merely have avoided starvation.

All the ‘dance’ was gone out of his eyes as he heard Stuart’s tale, and talked of that which he called, and thought, a heavy blow, and one hard to be borne.

Mrs. McTavish’s motherly instincts were aroused at sight of Stuart’s pale cheeks, and thin, fragile frame, and contrasting him with her own, ruddy-faced, romping lads, her kind heart was moved to pity, and with her, pity always blossomed outwards, and bore fruit in good deeds. Therefore she went out of the parlour, and going to her clean little kitchen, warmed some of the remains of the broth which had formed the family dinner. When the large steaming bowl, and thick hunch of white wheaten

bread (a rare luxury in humble households in Scotland at that date and for long after), were placed before the boy who was sitting somewhat listlessly near the centre table, the kind woman had her reward in his grateful words and looks. Not long after he had taken his supper Mrs. McTavish, pitying his evident weariness, took him away, and settled him into the one neat little guest-chamber which was a necessity in that house where strange ministers and persons of all ranks constantly required a night's entertainment.

'Eh! what a puir laddie yon is,' said Mrs. McTavish, on returning to her husband; adding, 'but he has a terrible spirit; think of him, the creature, coming all this length alone!'

'Yes, he is a fine-hearted laddie; I mind well our dear friend, who has just gone from us, speaking to me of him, and saying that he believed he was one who would yet make his mark in the world; and he will, I can well believe, once he gets a fair start. I like the glint of his een; he is a lad with bye ordinar' sense and spirit.'

'Ay, deed is he; and I wish, minister, that we could contrive some way of sending him on the road home; but ye see there's only your own horse, an' he wunna cairry double; forbye that the laddie will hae't that he maun take the road the morn's mornin'.'

Walter McTavish, the eldest of the family, who had come in from a visit to his schoolmaster, to whom he was much attached, a few minutes before,

looked up from the books to which he had immediately settled himself, and said—

‘Maister Grant needs to gang to Forfyvie the morn’s mornin’; he has had ill news o’ his sister, and he’s gettin’ the lend o’ Drumlinnie’s car, the which can easy cairry three men-folk, lat alane twa; an’ that would be sendin’ the laddie a gude ten mile upo’ his road.’

‘Now, that’s just a thoughtful man you are, Wattie; I’m right well pleased with ye for mindin’ on’t; it will be a real blessin’ to yon poor callant who has had more than a callant’s rightful fashes and tuilzies, gin I’m no muckle mistaen.’

‘Will I rin back to the school, and speer at the maister gin he’ll stop here as he gaes by the door the morn?’

‘Ay, Wattie, ye’d best dee that; and then haste ye to get to your bed, for it’s terrible late; my word, if it isna nigh hand nine o’clock!’

Stuart was indeed thankful for the ‘lift’ to Forfyvie, for, although ‘the car’ was a curious nondescript vehicle, innocent of springs and cushioned with straw, being conveyed therein was at least better than having to walk all the fifteen miles between Donaldstown and Ennerleddie; and all would have been well had not heavy rain come on, which penetrated through Stuart’s insufficient clothing, so that he was soon literally wet to the skin; and how he managed to walk the five remaining miles of his journey he never could afterwards remember. When he did reach home he was fit for nothing but to lie

down in bed, and suffer the alternate miseries of cold trembling, and burning heat.

The kindly widow woman remained with him that night, and the next day, when he was far too ill with rheumatic fever even to moan over his inability to attend Mr. Lindsay's funeral; or, indeed, to be fully conscious of any of the events which had lately seemed all-important.

When the funeral was over, and Hamish had carefully packed his master's possessions in strong chests, and left them at the principal inn of the town in charge of its mistress, he took up his station in Stuart's sick chamber, where also lay old Maister Hepburn, and went about between the beds, waiting on the old and the young invalid with the deftness and thoughtful tenderness of a woman, and the strength and prompt decision of a man.

At the end of a month his cares were rewarded by Stuart's restoration to health, and he was the more thankful for this good result, as he was now compelled to leave Ennerleddie and proceed to Edinburgh, Mrs. Angus having summoned him to take to her uncle Mr. Lindsay's goods, all of which had been left in trust to her, for distribution amongst his relatives; and as she had, through her brother-in-law, Lord Lillieslea, obtained permission for him to put himself and his chests under the escort of a small body of soldiers who were being removed from Kinloss to Stirling Castle, it was necessary that he should leave on a certain day. It is not to be supposed that Hamish liked the idea of travelling



with English soldiers, or the prospect of having to doff his kilts and wear the hated 'trews;' but for the memory of his beloved master, he would have done anything short of treason to the one king enshrined in his heart; and he said to Stuart—

'They will be thinking, those men, that I will not haf much of the English, and I will not let them guess how much it will be that I will haf of their unmusical tongue; and so, Hamish will not be getting himself into trouble with those men who will haf the great misfortune that they will be English; and they will not be thinking that I will be a soldier, I myself as well—oh, and better than they; but I will be knowing it ferry well, and I will be smiling within my heart when I will see their ugly red coats, and will be hearing all they will haf to say of the service of the wee German lairdie's great grandson; oh, no, and I will not be saying one word, not efen if they will be calling him the king; for my master and friend would haf said to me, Thou wilt not be quarrelling with these poor men, Hamish, *mon ami*.'

Stuart devoutly hoped that the old Franco-Celt would carry out this good resolution; but his fear was greater than his hope, and he dreaded that some day he might hear of a terrible broil on the road between him and the English soldiers, to whom he had an instinctive antipathy. However, nothing of the sort occurred; Hamish was almost as 'canny' as a Lowland Scot, and his French blood had given him the happy and enviable knack of adapting him-

self to circumstances, and of cheerful acquiescence in the inevitable, besides which, Lord Lillieslea, who had long been on the Hanoverian side (whilst contriving to retain private friendships with many Jacobites), had written to the officer in command of the detachment of troops, especially commending Hamish, as being the faithful attached servant of an honoured friend lately deceased, to his care and forbearing kindness, should he 'manifest too strongly the prejudices but natural to one of his country and name.'

Hamish did thus reach Edinburgh in safety, and soon after was sought out by Colonel Hepburn, who was anxious to hear not only the particulars of Mr. Lindsay's death, but also everything concerning old Maister David Hepburn and his grandson, the latter of whom Hamish's glowing eulogy elevated into something of a hero; and the vivid picture which he drew of his brave struggle, his unselfishness, and the privations which he constantly suffered, made the colonel resolve to hasten into the north; and about a fortnight later he joined himself to the party of a nobleman who, with his family and servants, was going to his castle, situated between Kinloss (from which place he received his title) and Donaldstown.

Travelling in Scotland at that date, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital, was, even for great and rich people, never an easy and not always a safe undertaking; and Colonel Hepburn thought himself fortunate in being able to obtain

a seat in Lord Cardross's large roomy coach, cumbersome and ill-hung vehicle though it was; and all the party rejoiced over their good fortune in the favourableness of the weather, and other circumstances, enabling them to perform the journey in seven days.

## CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE Hamish McBean left Ennerleddie, he procured for Stuart some employment, the remuneration for which would go far to keep the little family in the Red House in greater comfort than they had enjoyed for many months. The landlady of the one chief inn, Mistress Gillanders, had lately been left a widow, and as her husband had kept a small grocery shop as well as his inn, and had also farmed a few acres of land, she, having no son or brother, felt herself greatly at a loss with regard to the keeping of her books, making out accounts, &c., and was more than willing to intrust these matters to Stuart, whose honesty, steadiness, and devotion to his grandfather had long been her admiration. The payment she gave was so liberal, that Stuart was able to engage the regular services of Mistress Robb, who was now at liberty to take up her abode in the Red House, her only son, for whom she had kept house, having been induced to enter as a recruit into that regiment, a portion of which had lately halted two days at Ennerleddie, and taken Hamish McBean under its escort to Stirling.

Without Mrs. Robb's services Stuart could not

of course have left his grandfather. He was now almost quite happy; he had plenty of work, a necessity of life to him—and not uncongenial work, for he knew that he was as useful to his employer in rendering it to her, as her money was useful and helpful to him and his grandfather.

For three weeks all went well, and then the fair hopes were crushed, and another unlooked-for blow fell upon the brave lad. Coming home at mid-day for his dinner, and in the best of spirits, whistling blithely as he crossed the threshold, he was startled by the sound of moans and cries of pain, proceeding from the long-disused 'best parlour.' Hastily he threw back its half-closed door, and there, on the floor, below a high bookcase, and close beside an overturned chair, lay Mistress Robb, evidently in great pain. She had been endeavouring to reach the upper shelves for the purpose of dusting them—so she told him in broken sentences—and, missing her balance, had fallen from the chair, upsetting it in her fall. From her description of her pain, and her inability to move, Stuart feared that she had broken her leg, and when, with the aid of neighbours, he had carried her to her box-bed in the kitchen recess, and the surgeon arrived, he found his fear had been well founded; the broken limb was set, roughly enough, for the only medical man of the town was coarse and rough, though not altogether unskilful for the time and the remoteness of the district. The poor woman was condemned to lie in bed for at least five or six weeks, and

meanwhile, as she said, wringing her hands in her honest sorrow, 'What was Stuart to do?' The first thing was to try and find another woman, some one who could wait upon both invalids; and to procure anybody the scantiness of whose work would allow her to take this additional labour, Stuart well knew would not be easy; but, after a lengthened search, he did find two women who were able and willing to come and do the work by turns. But here an insurmountable difficulty arose: first, one of these women, then the other, was brought to Maister Hepburn's bedside, and neither of them would he tolerate; his cries and sobs of dislike and fear were so piteous, that Stuart could not suffer him to be tortured; as he evidently was, by their presence. The old man wept and groaned, and begged that Mistress Robb would come to him. Stuart endeavoured to make him understand that Mistress Robb could not come; but all that he gained by his endeavour was a closer and more pitiful clinging to himself. The old man clung with all the weak little might left in his aged right hand to his grandson, and his grandson's young muscular strength was powerless against the might of that weakness. There was nothing to be done but to remain with him, although by so doing he had to forfeit a good situation, and trust to the chances of earning a little money by weaving during some part of the nights and the hours of day in which his grandfather slept. Having to remain at home, he could not hire any other help; a female

neighbour came twice a day, half-an-hour in the morning and half-an-hour at nightfall, to wait upon Mistress Robb, and the rest of the needed work Stuart did himself; and now once again he had to stint himself in food that it might be eked out for the two under his care; but this renewed trial did not last long. In less than three weeks after Mistress Robb's accident, the end came, and to the boy it came with a strange suddenness, for he had never really anticipated it. He had risen at his usual hour one morning, and having dressed himself, went, as was his custom, to his grandfather's bed. The moment his eye fell upon the old man, he perceived that a great change had taken place. At first, he thought that he was dead; but, pressing his hand on the heart, and finding that it still beat, though feebly, he said a word of explanation to Mistress Robb, and ran for the doctor, whom he fortunately found at home. Strong restoratives were immediately tried, and Stuart applied a jar of hot water to the chill, numbed feet. But all these measures proved of no avail; the spark of bodily life, which had long been such a feeble little spark as to have been almost invisible, did not even flicker again, and in about an hour's time wholly died away. Stuart's natural unselfishness forbade his grieving over much; he remembered the sad death-in-life which the last two years had been to the old man, and trying to realise the bright rest and peace of his present existence, he checked all murmurs at his own completely orphaned, and

almost friendless, condition. Besides, the boy—already trained to take up the cares and burdens of life, even those which should not, *humanly speaking*, have fallen upon shoulders so young as his—knew that he must make arrangements for the funeral. How to order it decently and suitably he could not divine, because the necessary money was wanting. After much thought, he decided that he would, as soon as possible, sell as much of the remaining furniture as belonged to himself, and meanwhile would ask his late employer, Mrs. Gillanders, to lend him the money for the funeral expenses, and allow him to repay it by the future performance of the service he had before rendered to her, for he knew that she had not yet procured a suitable person to fill his place. With a heavy heart, but firm purpose, he went out, turning his steps in the direction of the ‘Hepburn Arms,’ as the chief inn was still called, although the family in whose honour the name had been given had long been exiled and impoverished. Sad as his thoughts were, Stuart could not help noticing in the street a stranger, a gentleman of noble and pleasing appearance, who stopped a passer-by apparently to ask some question. The person thus addressed pointed to Stuart, and the gentleman immediately crossed the road, and raising his hat with a courteous gesture, even whilst familiarly putting his hand on Stuart’s shoulder, said—

‘I am told that you are the very person of whom



I have been in search; you are Stuart Hepburn, are you not?’

‘Stuart Alexander McRonald, sir; but—’

‘Yes, yes, I know—McRonald, of course; but you are the grandson of my father’s faithful kinsman and comrade in arms, David Hepburn?’

‘Yes, sir, I am that; and you, then, are Gowanbraes? We have been hoping to see you for a weary lang time.’

‘I came as soon as I could arrange to do so after hearing Hamish McBean’s report of all your troubles. I came north with Lord and Lady Kinloss, and rode over from Donaldstown this morning; I left early and have only just arrived. I hope that my coming will be a relief to you from some of your troubles. Will you take me at once to your grandfather? I am longing to see him, although I fear that he will not know me.’

Stuart hesitated a moment to steady his voice, for he was but a young laddie; he could not, however, help its faltering, nor keep the tears from coming into his eyes, as he said, with the perfect simplicity which is more potent than the most elaborate eloquence—

‘Grandfather is dead, sir; I ken ye’ll be disappointed to hear it. He died about three hours ago, and I was comin’ oot now to see to the buryin’ o’ him.’

Colonel Hepburn was truly sorry, which was exactly what Stuart had meant by the idiom which appeared strange to the ears of one unaccustomed

to the tongue of his fatherland. His kind words comforted the boy, whose heart went out more and more to him when he saw his touched face and reverent gesture, as he stood by the bed whereon lay the dead body of old David Hepburn. The colonel gazed reverently on the face of one who had borne many sorrows nobly—one who had enjoyed a privilege that had been denied to himself, the privilege of bearing arms in the cause of his rightful sovereign. Colonel Hepburn was born in exile, after fatal Culloden, with all its sad results, had been fought out; and he had never drawn sword in the Stuart cause; indeed, in fighting in the East India Company's army, had really ranged himself on the side of the reigning House. He knew now—as most men of judgment knew in the year of grace, 1785—that there would be, and could be, no more fighting done for the Stuarts; the star of that right royal race had almost set, and on that very account it was that he gazed with such deep interest on one who had been born when that star was still above the horizon, and when there had been hope of its rising again to its old place in the political firmament. This aged man lying there in still, cold quietness, had once been in the thick of the fierce conflict of contending factions, had seen the sinking and rising, and sinking again, of the Stuart star, and had lived amongst the events which, to him who stood gazing on him, were only as names of things past and gone.

When at last Colonel Hepburn turned away he

followed Stuart into the 'best parlour,' into which the handsomest of the carved furniture (including the great bed in which Mrs. McDonald had died) was collected.

After opening a part of the shutter Stuart pointed out with some pride of tone the good state of preservation in which the furniture still was, saying—

'It's a' yours, ye ken, sir, an' I'm weel pleased that it isna muckle the waur o' wear.'

'Mine? How is that? this room belongs to my mother, I know, but its contents——'

'Dinna ye mind, sir,' interrupted Stuart, 'that when my lord, your father, pat grandfather intil this hoose for's life, he lent him a terrible lot o' the auld furniture that had belanged to his leddy's mither; he didna gie it to him, ye ken, but bade him tak the use o't, and take tent o't, in case he suld ever be needin' ony for himsel'; an' grandfather, he *did* take care o't, and sae did 'oor auld Tibbie; she was aye dustin' an' sortin' o't as lang's she was able, puir body. I couldna find time to keep it as bricht as she did, but I hae dune my best that it shouldna be spoilt.'

'I am sure that its condition does your care credit, but, indeed, I am sorry that these things should have been here all this time and you actually needing the money that the sale of them might have fetched.'

'We couldna hae touched what wasna ours, sir, however sair we micht hae been wantin' siller,'

answered the boy with a touch of haughtiness that did not, somehow, sit ill upon him.


‘Well, I shall act for my mother now, and sell these things; it so happens that Lord Cardross, with whom I have been staying, told me of his wish to procure some carved furniture of ancient date for three very old rooms in Cardross Castle, which he has lately made habitable. There must be at least two or three hundred pounds worth here, and that money, or whatever more we may get, shall be yours, and properly invested for you.’

. ‘For me, sir? that would be far too much for ye to dae for me!’

‘No, not at all. You have behaved very well, and as good David Hepburn’s grandson you ought to be looked after by us, and your future interest cared for; in the meanwhile, I shall go out into town and order the arrangements for the funeral, after which, if you will meet me at the Hepburn Arms, we will have dinner together; come to me there in an hour’s time.’

During the next hour the colonel not only executed the business of which he had just spoken, and which he did with no niggardly hand, being sincerely desirous of doing honour to the memory of his father’s kinsman and faithful comrade in arms, but he also gained more information about Stuart, hearing, everywhere he went, pleasant tales of his industry, self-denial, and steadiness; and of what the speakers most admired, his ‘proper pride’ and independence—that he had ‘never sought siller frae

ony man.' The more the colonel heard, the more pleased he became with the boy, and this interest was increased by his manners and talk during dinner. When the cloth had been removed and the two were left alone over the claret, dried fruit, and shrivelled apples, 'the dessert' in which Mrs. Gillander's heart gloried, there was rather a long pause of silence. Colonel Hepburn was recalling the letter that he had received from Mr. Lindsay, written a few days before his death, telling him of Stuart, of his goodness, his talent for acquiring languages, and his desire of being a soldier, with the reasons for that desire ; and thus thinking of that letter, and seeing before him the fine countenance and tall, noble frame of the boy himself, he began to wish much that he could adopt him and give him a fair start in life ; he had no son, and only one little daughter, now six years old, whose mother had died soon after her birth ; he had loved that mother so deeply that, comparatively young though he was, he was fully aware that he could never give her a successor. All the little property remaining to the Hepburn family was his mother's for her life, and was settled upon his one daughter and his only brother, who had lately gone to India to work here in the legal profession under the service of the Company. For himself, he was not wealthy, although he had brought home from India (the El-Dorado of that age) enough money to purchase a pretty country house near Edinburgh, which, after having furnished, he had given to his mother, who had pined sorely in the



wynds of Old Edinburgh for the country air and pursuits to which she had been used in girlhood and early married life. Certainly then he could not make Stuart his heir, or, indeed, leave him more than a small legacy; yet by adopting him as his son he could at once place him in a position where-in he might by his own efforts rise to both rank and wealth; and if it were true that he really wished to become a soldier and would consent to enter the Company's service, he believed that he could provide for him so far as to give him that honourable start in life. At this juncture in his thoughts he found Stuart's eyes fixed intently upon him, so, smiling, he said—

‘What is it, my laddie—what is it you are thinking of?’

Stuart hesitated.

‘I was wishing that I could ever be like you, sir.’

‘How? In what respect?’

‘That I could be a soldier, sir. I didna mean an officer, ye ken, for maybe I haena ony richt to be that, but a single soldier.’

‘You really would like to be a soldier? Mr. Lindsay wrote to me that such was your wish, and the reasons which you gave him for the wish are such as would make me like to gratify it if possible.’

‘Maister Lindsay wrote to you about me, sir, eh? but it was terrible gude o’ him to dae that; he was aye gude to me sin ever I can mind.’

‘Ah! you loved him very much, did you not?’

‘I hadna ony ither body to love, sir, but him, an’

grandfather, and Tibbie; ah! an' Maister Hamish tae.'

'You should add him, for I can tell you that he speaks well of you; so then you really wish to be a soldier?'

'Ay, 'deed do I; but whaur's the use o' thinkin' o't when there's nae hope o' fechtin' for him that's ower the water, ye ken.'

'No, there does indeed seem no hope of any more fighting for him,' replied Colonel Hepburn. Adding gravely, 'Perhaps, too, it would be better not to think about that, not even to call it a hope, for the will of God seems to have set a decided No thereupon; but you could do good, honourable work out in India if you think that you could make up your mind to the life and the work.'

'I should like it weel eneuch, sir; I could get to like ony work that's gien to me to dae, but that is the vera ane I would choose, only I dinna richtly see how I am to get it.'

'I believe I can manage that; I think I can procure a cadetship in the Bengal establishment for you, because I think that you are fairly entitled to that position and ought not to be what you call a single soldier. At all events, I have the full belief that you will do credit to the higher social position, and that as you have the feelings and principles of a gentleman, you will not disgrace the time-honoured name of gentleman.'

It was in these simple words that the colonel told Stuart of the change that was to take place

in his life, and as he spoke he held out his hand to meet that of the boy, who turned away his head to hide his feelings; he struggled bravely with his tears, not letting them fall; but his voice was full of them as he said—

‘Sir, I canna thank ye properly; but oh! I wish grandfather could hae kent o’ yer kindness to me.’

‘Perhaps he does know it, my boy; we cannot tell how much the dear departed friends may know about what concerns us here below,’ replied the colonel, who was moved by the unselfishness of nature that the simple words revealed. Had the boy indeed no thought of himself in the perpetual remembrance of others?

‘Sir, I am afraid that I will be a terrible expense to you, an’ I havena ony richt to be that, ye ken.’

‘What a boy you are for thinking about the rights of things,’ Colonel Hepburn said good-humouredly. ‘I can see reasons why I should help you; there are strong ties of country and of common interest, even of blood between us; besides, am I never to be allowed the pleasure of helping those who deserve help? for, let me tell you once for all, laddie, your past conduct entitles you to help, and to the esteem of all who know it; go on behaving as you have done, and I feel sure that you will be a credit to your country and to me, for I desire to help you, as far as lies in my power, to make your way in the world.’

‘Deed, sir, I dinna ken what you’re meanin’; ye canna ken hoo unco foolish I’ve been, an’ hoo



I micht hae garred grandfather's siller gae farther gin I had had mair sense.'

'Well, I am not likely to be able to form a correct judgment upon *that* head, but I do know that you did your very best in all matters, and that you showed unselfishness and helpful kindness beyond your years; for our good Mr. Lindsay told me all that, and I feel proud of your conduct.'

At last Stuart began to understand something of what the colonel meant, and the glad and worthy thrill caused by deserved approbation awoke in his heart, and shone outwards in his honest young face, that was all one crimson blush as he raised it to meet Colonel Hepburn's smiling eyes, and said simply—

'Thank you, sir; gin Maister Lindsay thoct that o' me, it maun hae been true, an' I'm glad that you're pleased wi' me.'

'I am pleased, so there must be no more said about obligations. I shall help you as far as I can, and as far as it is *right* for me to do; and after all, I shall not spend such a terrible lot o' siller as you imagine, for I am pretty certain to be given a commission in our Bengal army for you, and then you will have in a great measure to fend for yourself and carve out your own fortunes.'

'That's fine, sir! an' I will work wi' a' my he'rt.'

'I am sure of that; and this reminds me there will be one especial work in which, if all I have heard be true, you are likely to excel, and be of great use to the Company. I am told that you are quick in learning languages, is this so?'

‘Maister Lindsay aye said that it was easy to me to learn a new tongue, sir; and sae did Maister Matheson, our schoolmaster.’

‘Well, Hamish says that you are thoroughly acquainted with French; would you object to taking this sheet of paper, and writing me a short letter upon any subject you like?’

Stuart hesitated a minute; ‘I canna think what to pit doun unless, maybe, ye’ll let me write about the walk I had to Donaldstown, and the folk I saw there.’

‘That will do very well: just a page or two.’

In about ten minutes Stuart handed back the paper on which was written a letter, brief indeed, but in well-worded grammatical French.

‘Very good; quite correct, a little stiff and formal perhaps, but that is not to be wondered at; now, would you mind reading this aloud?’

The broad Scotch in which Stuart ordinarily talked had made Colonel Hepburn rather incredulous as to his being able to make himself understood in any other tongue; but to his extreme surprise, pronunciation and even accent were—even to his ear, trained by long residence in France—almost perfect; he guessed rightly that the delicate intonation, the dainty, graceful, court accent had been gained from that polished gentleman, and finished scholar, Mr. Lindsay; and with genuine satisfaction, he said, ‘Thank you! my mother would be quite charmed to hear you; it is the very sort of French that she loves to hear; now, if you can

only as readily learn the different Indian dialects, I think your fortune will be made; you will obtain good employment as interpreter and secretary to some of the big-wigs high in office, by and by.'

'I'd like fine to learn many tongues; an' please, sir, ye think that there'd be a gude chance o' making siller that way—a hantle o't; div ye think that?'

Colonel Hepburn was rather startled by this question; it did not seem like Stuart to have asked it; and through the high-born man's mind did flash the thought that mixture of inferior blood tells injuriously even upon characters naturally refined and noble; thus, there was a shade of coldness in the tone of his answer.

'Possibly, a good deal of money might be made in that way, or at any rate, it would provide openings for various fashions of making it. I suppose you are bitten with the usual Scotch mania for acquiring riches.'

Stuart hardly understood the full meaning of this reply, though he gathered that the colonel was not pleased, and was troubled by the perception, but he answered ingenuously.

'I dinna think that I'm carin' muckle aboot riches; nae for mysel', that is to say. I've a thocht i' my heid, but, I haena richtly thocht it oot yet; when I've dune that, I'll tell ye a' my mind, gin ye'll be sae gude as to listen to me.'

Already Colonel Hepburn felt ashamed of his hard thoughts, and his smile reassured Stuart; nevertheless, one of his previous reflections bore

fruit in the question. 'Have you many relations on your father's side, Stuart?'

'Na, sir. I havena ony near friends noo; father was grandmother's ae child, an' she was ain niece to grandfather that's just gane awa, ye ken; and we dinna richtly ken gin father himsel' be livin' or not; for he gaed awa afore I was born, an' grandfather he hasna heard ony word o' him a' these fifteen year; sae we think that he surely maun be deid.'

The colonel felt relieved; he also thought it probable that the unworthy man was dead, and gathering from Stuart's words and manner that he had no suspicion as to the real nature of his father's character and conduct, he felt the less hesitation in making the proposition which he had been for some minutes revolving in his mind.

'If you know of no particular objection to doing so, Stuart, I should like you to be known only by the name of Hepburn; your honoured grandfather's name and mine. I should feel as if I had a greater right in you then, and my dear mother would, I think, be better pleased; what do you say? Have you any great objection?'

Stuart was silent for some time, at last he replied: 'Sir, I'm sure that ye wouldna ask me to dae ony thing that was'na becomin', sae gin ye can certifee that it wouldna be an affront to my puir father, wha's maybe deid, an' maybe nae; an' gin it's nae upsettin' an evenin' mysel' to my betters, I'll dae your will i' the maitter.'

‘What an honest, upright soul this lad has, and what a well-balanced mind!’ thought the colonel even as he merely replied,

‘No, I do not think that it would be any disrespect to your father; and for my part, I am well pleased that you should be known as belonging to me, and being of my kindred; besides, you owe all reverence to your good grandfather, and may well be proud to bear his name.’

‘I am that, sir, proud that it is his and yours.’

As the colonel wished to see his young charge in a dress more suitable to his improved prospects, he made the necessity for mourning apparel the excuse for providing him at once with all that the best Ennerleddie tailor was capable of supplying; and on the morning of the funeral he appeared in a costume that in style and pattern resembled Colonel Hepburn’s, and with his hair properly dressed, and slightly powdered, and wearing a sword, looked every inch a gentleman, and neither flustered by his unwonted bravery, nor vain of it, accepting it as simply and contentedly as he had ever accepted the plain, coarse clothing of his former social station. He had other and better thoughts to occupy him that day, and many persons at this present hour ought to give God thanks for the rich fruit of the seed which that day’s reflections sowed in the ‘good ground’ of a settled and unalterable purpose.

## CHAPTER X.

DAVID HEPBURN, full of years, if not of worldly honours, was laid to rest in the Cathedral yard, near the entrance to the Chapter-house, wherein he had found Stuart's mother. Stuart, who knew that story, at least, of the time before his birth, naturally felt an interest in the spot, and when the funeral company had dispersed, he lingered behind, and Colonel Hepburn considerably left him alone, and went to the Red House to explain to Widow Robb the plans that he had made for her future comfort; for Stuart, who had made no request for himself, had begged that that might be secured beyond fear of change; and the colonel had gladly undertaken that the humble friend who had done her best to aid Stuart in his troubles should be suitably provided for. Money was to be sunk to provide her with a small annuity; and she and a niece were to be settled into a cottage not far from the Red House, and which was to be fitted up with the remains of Maister Hepburn's furniture, and as there were a byre, and a 'kail yaird,' and even a wee orchard behind the cottage, the good woman was likely to be very comfortable and happy.

Stuart sat on the seat against which his mother had fallen in her faintness and weariness, and his heart was full as he looked out at the grave-digger rapidly filling in the new-made grave, and thought of him who was being hidden away in its depths, and who had nourished his childhood at the expense of his own health and strength, both of which were already enfeebled by age and sorrow when he undertook a care which would have been trying to a younger person. Stuart thought of this, and of the many hardships that the old man had endured, and of which his own father's extravagance had been the cause, for that much, together with the fact of the desertion of his wife, had been made known to him, though of the other crimes that he had committed he was still ignorant; and Stuart, as he recalled those hardships, pondered what his own condition would have been if his grandfather had not taken upon himself the burden of maintaining him. He knew that poor people abounded, nay, literally swarmed in Scotland, and that the wretchedness of their condition was something terrible to contemplate; and that even when they were relieved by the State, they were treated almost as criminals, seeing that the very places of refuge into which some of them were gathered were called 'Houses of Correction.' He knew that the whole land was infested with tramps, who only kept body and soul together by constant begging and frequent acts of petty larceny; men, women, and children, who seldom slept under the shelter even of a byre,

and whose rags could not be called a covering, being scarcely sufficient for the mere purposes of decency. He might have been one of those homeless, friendless, and degraded outcasts had it not been for the self-denying kindness of his aged grandfather who had fed and clothed him, had him taught many branches of worldly knowledge, and above all, trained him in the ways of godliness, and in fact, had fitted him for the new and higher position into which he had just been brought. He had now before him the career of a gentleman, and as the title of gentleman meant more to people in those days than it does now, when it is more easily, and often less rightfully, acquired, he believed that he could not have been called to greater honour, and this honour was owing primarily to the old man whom he was seeing laid in his grave. Little wonder is it that the feeling of grateful love almost choked him; and he was so constituted, that he could never be contented with mere feeling; action was ever a necessity to him—if he were grateful, he must find some way of manifesting his gratitude, some deed that would prove it, for to manifest it by talking never occurred to him. It is possible that many persons circumstanced as Stuart was, might have been as truly grateful as he was, and yet not have felt themselves called upon and necessitated to testify their gratitude in any other ways than those of attention to personal integrity and uprightness of life; but Stuart was called to a higher life, in fact, the highest life of all—that which has



the good and happiness of the human brotherhood for its chief aim and object; *he* was so called, and it would have been sin in him had he rejected the call. He was moved to a great work and pledged himself to the performance of it, not guessing that it was great, or that the doing of it would ennoble him for all time; but undertaking it with the simplicity with which all great and noble workers have always undertaken great and noble work. Stuart saw not the greatness of his life's purpose, but he did see its difficulties; he did see that it would be a barrier against many worldly enjoyments, and curtail even his comforts. Yet, though he clearly foresaw all this, he hesitated not to make the vow, knowing well what a vow meant, knowing its solemnity, and the impossibility, to a Christian, of breaking it. Unobserved by the only other occupant of the cathedral ruins, who was engrossed in his business, Stuart knelt at the worn, moss-stained seat, where many a canon and cowled monk had sat and knelt, and as solemnly as any young knight of old who had watched his armour near that very spot, when the present ruin was a stately and glorious temple for the worship of God, did this chivalrous-hearted youth make his vow to be 'a helper of the poor and suffering.' Hope, resolve, and prayer were blended together in the spoken words which were as simple as all his words then and always were. Many years later, he told his nearest and dearest friend that he believed they had been something like these: 'Our Father, which art in Heaven, I

wish to help some of Thy poor bairns who have no friends, an' auld folk, who cannot work. Wilt Thou teach me how to make them comfortable, and to be kind to them for grandfather's sake an' Maister Lindsay's, and for Thy glory.'

Painters have often painted the touching and thought-suggestive ceremony of a knight-designate keeping his vigil beside the armour that he was so soon to don, kneeling before the High Altar, the sanctuary lamp shedding its soft radiance on the bent, young head; and the sculptured figures of saint and bishop, king and warrior, noble knight, and holy dame, shining out white, and pure, and solemn from the surrounding gloom. I wish that some artist would paint my true hero, Stuart Hepburn, as he knelt in that quaint, despoiled Chapter-house, the bright tender sunshine of a May day (softened and made more tender by the veil of ivy-leaves round the unglazed window through which it fell) gleaming slantingly upon his head, giving a silver sheen to the yellow, powder-touched hair; and the effect of being carved out of ivory to the lace-ruffled hands clasped together upon the warm-hued sandstone seat! It was a righteous and altogether lawful vow—that vow of Stuart Hepburn's, not that presumptuous taking of the whole future life into one's own hands which some vows seem to be; and not a reckless disregarding of the possible leadings of God's providence; but a vow that would be lawful under all circumstances, and suitable to any position in life. It occupied but a few minutes

of time, this beautiful scene, but its results continue until the present hour, and will, in all probability, continue until time shall be no more. The planner of a noble deed went quietly home to the ordinary business of life, and no one around him guessed that a purpose fraught with large results had been resolved upon, for to the eyes of their fellow-men the faces of those who 'have been with God,' do not always shine as did that of Moses on coming down from the Mount.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days after the funeral, Colonel Hepburn and Stuart left Ennerleddie for Edinburgh by sea, having had the chance offered to them of a passage in a good-sized vessel which in a storm of a fortnight before had taken refuge in the harbour of Leddiemouth, three miles from Ennerleddie.

## CHAPTER XI.

COLONEL HEPBURN complimented Stuart upon being such a good sailor, that, as far as any uncomfortable feelings were concerned, he might have been on dry land; and said it was indeed a fortunate thing, seeing that he had the prospect of a long voyage before him. Under these happy circumstances, Stuart was able to enjoy the view of the coast, and of the towns which stood, here and there, along it. He was, of course, especially interested in Port Henry, to which they passed so close that he could notice its peninsular position, its small island, cut off from the main town by an artificial channel, and the solid look of its compactly grouped red granite houses, and wondered in which of those narrow wynds running up from the shore his parents had been married. A few hours were spent in Aberdeen, the captain of the vessel having some business in that port, and Colonel Hepburn kindly took Stuart ashore, and showed him as much as he could in the time allowed to them. Stuart thought it a wonderfully noble city, and talked much about it until he arrived in Edinburgh, and then he had no room for thoughts of anything but

*its* manifold attractions of Palace and Castle, and lofty houses. Colonel Hepburn explained to him how that when he was a boy, there had been but little thought of that part of the city now called the New Town, which Stuart saw stretching away to the north of the ancient citadel, and its underlying streets; and that there really had been a loch in that space now drained, and filled in underneath the fine 'North Bridge,' the foundation stone of which was laid by Provost Drummond in 1767.

The Colonel and Stuart lay that night (to use a phrase even then still in vogue) in that flat of a house in the Old Town which Lady Marjorie still retained, although she and her household, with the exception of two servants left in charge of the rooms in town, now resided at 'The Dens,' the small country seat with which her son had presented her. Colonel Hepburn despatched a messenger thither, desiring that the family coach might be sent for him and Stuart on the following day, in the early morning of which they were abroad; and many hours were spent in visiting the Castle, Holyrood House, and other objects of interest, amongst them George Heriot's Hospital, for on the voyage, in the hush of a moonlight night, an hour and scene inviting to confidence, Stuart had told his kind friend of his heart's desire and purpose; not from any desire to boast of it, but because he rightly thought that the knowledge was due to one who had taken upon himself the office and the loving duties of his father. The Colonel had sympathised

warmly, had thrown no difficulties in the way, and had done nothing to damp the boy's happy hopes, although his own, seeing that he was rather more than double Stuart's age, were not quite so sanguine; still he knew that fortunes could be made in India, and he fully believed that if Stuart were one of the many successful in making a fortune, he would certainly spend a large portion of it in the good scheme which he had conceived. Little did the master of the hospital imagine that the quiet-mannered, grave-faced young 'gentleman' who listened interestedly to everything he had to say, and inquired attentively into every detail of the management of the charity, had, not many weeks before, been a sorrowful-hearted boy, struggling against terrible odds to maintain himself and an aged parent, or that, after many years, he would be as noble a benefactor of the human race as George Heriot, and a far more enlightened one.

When the visit to the hospital was over, Colonel Hepburn advised Stuart to go into the sitting-room of his town house (whose outer door they were just passing) and rest himself, as he looked a little tired, whilst he should go on to transact some business before starting for 'The Dens,' which they would have to do in about an hour's time. Stuart obeyed instantly; obedience was natural to him, although he had had to think much for himself; and this characteristic Colonel Hepburn had early discovered in him, and thought how good and valuable a quality it was for one who was to be a soldier;

being a soldier (and a good thorough soldier) himself, he knew that no one can command well and judiciously who cannot obey promptly and implicitly.

When Stuart entered the withdrawing-room, as Lady Marjorie would have called it, he thought that it seemed rather dark and gloomy; perceiving that a thick curtain hung over the greater portion of the deep, projecting window, he went to draw it aside, intending to rest himself on the wide cushioned seat which he had noticed the evening before. Scarcely had he drawn aside a part of the curtain before he almost dropped it in his great surprise, for there, curled up upon the old damask cushions was, as he for a moment really believed, a little fairy! The next instant he saw that it was a genuine mortal child, but certainly, a beautiful one. To Stuart, who had never before come into close contact with a high-bred lady of any age, this tiny gentlewoman was a very fair and wonderful sight, something to be gazed on with bated breath; as he gazed, she came down from her cushions, and stood before him, her natural height somewhat increased by the heels of her buckled and rosetted slippers; her frock of pink quilted satin stuck out stiffly from the slender little frame; but above it, in infinitely graceful folds, hung a panier of white silk, brocaded in tiny bouquets of roses and rose-buds. Her black hair fell in its own natural curls around the lovely face, and pink-tinted baby throat; but as if to atone for that touch of nature, a grotesque little satin hat, its shallow crown wreathed

with roses, rested on the top of the curls that were drawn up above the brow. One of the dainty little hands was bare below the elbow ruffle of yellow tinted thread lace, fine as a cobweb ; but the other hand and arm were covered with a long glove of white leather, embroidered in silver thread, and tiniest seed pearls. This Queen Titania made a deep curtsey, and said,

‘Where is my father? I came from the Dens to look for him, and take him hame wi’ me.’

The last words being in the homely vernacular, reassured Stuart, and he replied as he also bowed almost to the ground, ‘Your father has gane some way on some concern o’ his ain, and bid me wait here till he should return, madam,’ Stuart added hesitatingly, wondering whether that was the proper and fitting title to give the pretty child. The little lady smiled and said,

‘I am not madam ; that is what people say to Lady Marjorie, my grandmother. *I* am just Mistress Marjorie Hepburn, Gowanbrae’s dochter ; and you are Stuart, arena you? the gude laddie that Hamish M’Bean spoke to us aboot ; the gude laddie wha took care o’ his auld grandfather, arena you?’

‘I am Stuart, Mistress Marjorie,’ replied the ‘gude laddie,’ blushing hotly under the eager scanning gaze.

‘I am glad father brocht ye wi’ him ; are ye gaun to bide a whilie wi’ us?’

‘Colonel Hepburn is sae gude as to bid me bide wi’ him, Mistress Marjorie.’



‘That is richt; an’ ye needna be saying Mistress Marjorie ilka time you’re speakin’ to me, or I’ll be wearyin’ o’ my name; but hoo is’t ye could come awa’ frae your auld grandfather, and leave him his lane?’

Even as the little girl spoke her eyes fell upon Stuart’s mourning clothes, and the hot blood of penitent shame flamed in her cheeks as she hastily added—

‘Oh, forgie me! I suld hae kent better, and no hae asked ye sic a question, for I’m feared that he’s dead.’

‘Aye, just that, Mistress Marjorie; and it was a sair trouble to me.’

‘But we will comfort you, and be aye guid to you, so you must try and be happy.’

‘I’ll surely be happy if *you* are guid to me, you bonny little leddie,’ said Stuart, as impulsively as he had ever said anything in his life, for his heart was full of a new sensation; he understood now what he had missed, without being aware of the want—the companionship and love of a sister; he longed to pet and caress this little fairy-like creature, and yet he would not have dared to touch her. The pretty child herself had no such scruples, she put out the ungloved hand, and laying it on his coat-sleeve answered—

‘Very well, that is a paction then, that I will be good to you, gin you will take care of me when we go out in the parks, and gin you will’na let the big dog nor the Bubblyjock rin after me, for I’m feared

o' them, and whiles I greet, and then my grandmother flytes upon me, and says that I'm a coward; but gin you are wi' me I'll not be feared, for you will take care o' me, will na you?'

'Aye, 'deed will I; naething sall hairm you gin I be beside you, or it sall hairm me first,' and Stuart ventured to stroke the little fingers with a touch as dainty as they themselves.

'That is a' vera gude, kind Stuart, and I will like you very much; but, there, oh! there is my father!' added the lively little girl, and with one great cry of delight she bounded off, to be caught up and folded tightly in Colonel Hepburn's arms. After one long eager kiss she struggled to be put down, and as soon as she was on the floor, she held out her frock with both hands and, drawing back her right foot, made a deep and elaborate curtsy, saying, when she had recovered breath after the operation—

'That is what my grandmother says I ought to do when first I see her or you, and I hae been practising at it a weary lang time.'

Colonel Hepburn smiled, and catching her up again in his arms, said—

'You precious wee wifie; father's own sweet-heart!' adding, after another kiss or two, 'So I see that you and Stuart have made friends already?'

'Oh yes, and he is vera gude; he will take care o' me and no let the big dog and the Bubblyjock rin after me,' the little lady replied complacently from her throne in her father's arms.

'Ah, Stuart,' said the Colonel. 'It seems that your share in the division of this world's goods is to help other people, and do something for them'; adding, as he rubbed his cheek against his daughter's, 'Don't you know, little lassie, that you mustn't always have people waiting upon you and helping you; you must do something for them?'

'Yes,' replied Marjorie, in a rather doubtful and sobered tone.

'Then you see Stuart mustn't be good to you unless you are good to him. What will you do for *him* if he is to keep away the big dog from *you*?'

'Oh, I'll gie him berries and posies, and I'll sing him songs, and I will let him carry me over the muddy bits in the roads and the parks; and whiles, he sall gie me a kiss.'

Merrily laughed the Colonel.

'Oh, May! May! there's a terrible deal of selfishness in your little heart, my bonnie bairn.'

'Deed, sir,' put in Stuart, 'I'm sure I will be mair than weel paid for keeping the nasty fearsome beasts awa' frae the bonnie wee leddie, gin she'll do a' that for me.'

'Well, if *you* are satisfied with your share of the bargain it is not for me to make you discontented; but will you please be so good as to go and tell one of the maids to take your packages down to the coach which is at the door, or will be in a few minutes?'

As soon as Stuart had left the room Marjorie looked up in her father's face with a puzzled ex-

pression in her dark-blue eyes, and said, in a low, wondering tone,

‘Please, father, how is it that Stuart has such fine clothes, clothes like yours, ye ken, only they’re black? I thocht he was a puir laddie, and no a young gentleman, but I didna like to ask him ony questions about it.’

‘That was quite right, little daughter; he has been very poor, but *I* think he has always been a gentleman, for his heart is kind and tender, his words true, his dealings honest, and his manners gentle. He is going, I hope, to be a soldier like me, and no good or wise person will think the less of him for having been very very poor.’

‘But, father, his hands are not like yours, and grandmother’s, and Lord Lilliesleas’, and anybody’s; they are hard like Hamish’s and Roger’s—like folk that work, ye ken.’

‘Yes, my wee wifie, because, as he has been poor, he has been obliged to work, and no honest work is a disgrace, always remember that; besides, doesn’t my lassie mind of one who was the King of Heaven and earth, the noblest and truest gentleman that ever lived in this world, Who worked as a carpenter in a little humble workshop? He Who was the great and good God Himself worked when He was living here as a man.’

‘Yes, father, I mind, grandmother told me of that; so I will love Stuart a’ the same, although his hands are hard, and maybe they’ll soon get soft and white when he has na ony mair work to do.’

Stuart now came back to say that the coach was all ready, and Colonel Hepburn, with much amusement, watched his little daughter go up to him and say—

‘ You must take my hand and lead me down the stairs like Lord Lilliesleas does to grandmother ;’ and Stuart gravely performed the task very well, and almost as if he had been to the manner born. It was fortunate that his first lesson in the art of squiring dames, which in those days was an essential part of a gentleman’s education, should have been so easily and pleasantly acquired ; and so thought the Colonel, though it must be acknowledged that the conversation with his little daughter had put into his mind some misgivings as to what his lady mother might think of his schemes for Stuart, and whether she would consider that he had been altogether wise. A glance at the boy himself as he sat beside him in the roomy chariot amusing the little girl who had taken up her throne on his knee, greatly reassured him. No one, especially not such a skilled judge of the article as his mother was, could look at that boy and not see that he was intuitively a gentleman, and had the blood of the noble and the gentle in his veins. Colonel Hepburn was no leveller of ranks, but he knew that there are persons marked out by God to rise in the social scale, and he believed that Stuart was one of those so marked. He hoped to be able to make his mother share his conviction, and he had the better hope as he had more than once heard her say that

she had no objection to persons rising in the world by any honourable means, but that she had a great contempt for those who, 'having risen by their own exertions, despised those who were rising, and endeavoured to retard their upward progress.'

Five miles out of Edinburgh, even in 1785, meant complete country, and 'The Dens' was a thoroughly rural home, situated at the head of one of those natural hollows, long, narrow, and often winding between two low hills rising abruptly from the plain, and called in Scotch parlance 'a den.' Through this particular den ran, or rather leaped and jumped (such a merry little kelpie governed it) a burn, and the avenue raised above it followed its windings, until, when nearing the house, it let the burn take one of its prettiest curves by itself, whilst it widened out into a broad gravel sweep gradually rising to the top of the little knoll upon which stood the house, one of those delicious bits of domestic architecture almost peculiar to Scotland, and which has yet so many of the characteristics of the French châteaux that it has been aptly called the 'Franco-Scottish style.' In all these buildings there is a quaint mixture of homely family dwelling-house and warlike castle, and 'The Dens' was behind none of its kind in all possible quaintness, and picturesque confusion of irregular roof-elevations, long, low wings, abruptly rising 'pepper-box' shaped turrets, 'crow-stepped' gables, queer, twisted chimneys, pointed porches, and one high square battlemented tower, pierced with narrow windows; nor

was it lacking in richness of colour, being built of red sandstone, and roofed with purplish-grey slate. Both walls and roofs were in many parts encrusted with yellow lichen, and these hues contrasted well with masses of dark-green ivy, jessamine, pale monthly roses, and cream-tinted honeysuckle, which climbed, or clustered, or drooped, each according to its different nature, in every available and possible nook and corner; whilst,—between the long, narrow windows, which reached to the ground of the lowest and straightest portion of the house containing the eating and withdrawing-rooms of the family,—was trained, in the very perfection of Scotch skill in arboriculture, a splendid apricot-tree, at this time, the end of May, full of its beautiful blossoms; but this tree, the glory of the place, was at the back of the house, where the living-rooms looked out upon a little grassy parterre, sloping down the knoll until lost in the parks (Anglicé fields), where sheep and cattle grazed, and beyond them stretched a varied landscape, ending in the “blue Pentlands.” There is no need to invent any other than the familiar, time-honoured adjective for these hills,—comparatively low,—therefore perhaps all the more lovely and lovable.

The surroundings of the house were not so neat as those of family dwellings at the present day; domestic labours were not so carefully hidden out of sight, and articles of personal clothing, as well as bed and table-linen, lay out to be dried and

bleached upon the sloping knoll in the very front of the hall door. Many weeds grew in the gravel sweep, and there was a very wilderness of unpruned shrubs round three sides of the house and parterre; but where any gardening had been attempted, it had been brought to that perfection for which Scotch horticulture was, even at that period, justly celebrated, and an excellent though small, walled garden lay further down in the sheltering hollow, whilst terraced beds of strawberries climbed up a part of the southern bank of one of the two hills, the other being left in its native wildness of moss, ferns, and birks, that most graceful of all British trees.

Marjorie had told her father during the drive to The Dens that her grandmother was suffering from a catarrh, as people in those days called a cough or cold, so on arriving at the house the Colonel was quite prepared for the message that her ladyship could not leave her private sitting-room that evening, but would be glad to receive him there at his earliest convenience. He was not altogether sorry to have the opportunity of seeing her alone, and telling his story before introducing its hero.



## CHAPTER XII.

LADY MARJORIE HEPBURN was one of that distinguished class of high-born Scottish women which, with all its generic characteristics and striking qualities, has been so well and charmingly described by Sir Walter Scott and other writers of note, that it seems presumptuous to follow in their wake, and even to endeavour to set before the reader a picture of only one particular individual of that well-known class; and yet it is impossible to omit speaking of one who helped to influence the fortunes of our hero in whom we are greatly interested. She was born in the year 1715, and was the only child of the second marriage of her father, the Earl of Rowanbank, who in his youth had accompanied Monk on his celebrated march into England which ended in the restoration of the Stuart family to the throne; and had fought side by side with 'Bonnie Dundee' at Killiecrankie, and who, at the time of her birth, was a hale, magnificent man of seventy-five years of age. His second countess, almost a girl—being scarcely twenty—had received her education abroad, and was something of an heiress, owning a house (which even then was deemed a curious remnant of

antiquity) in Ennerleddie, and an estate in the immediate neighbourhood of that city. Both the aged father and the youthful mother were very proud of their little daughter, and great were the rejoicings in the old castle which stood in the very heart of the Ross-shire Highlands. The sons and daughters of the first countess, grown-up men and women, also rejoiced with their father and stepmother, who had been the bosom friend of the only unmarried sister amongst them. There was the more of mirth and gaiety because all knew that a terribly troublous time was close at hand. Amongst the merriest of the feast-keepers was Lord Hepburn, who had come of age only a few months before, and whose long-orphaned minority had been spent at Rowanbank Castle, the earl having been his guardian. This young man was present when the little Marjorie was baptized, and indeed stood at the font as proxy for her godfather, no less a personage than the Chevalier S. George, or, as he was called in that house, King James VIII. After the ceremony, the baron gave back the little maiden saying, laughingly, as he threw a string of costly pearls round her neck—

‘Take gude care o’ her for my sake, nurse, for maybe, she’ll be a wife to me some day!’

‘And why not?’ cried the countess, somewhat irritated by the amused laughter of all present which followed the young man’s speech. Certainly she—who had married for love a man fifty-four years her senior—could not think that a difference of

twenty-one years between a husband and wife was anything to speak of.

Lord Hepburn remembered this, and feared that she might really feel hurt; being a true gentleman in nature, as well as in name, he went to her side, bending over her chair, and lifting her hand to his lips, he said, in low tones—

‘I thank you, indeed, dear madam, for what is almost a promise that if I should venture to pay my addresses to the daughter of one of the most perfect of her sex, and therefore certain herself to be perfect, I shall have your gracious consent and favour.’

But little more of laughter, or of courtly compliment, passed in that castle for many a long month. Almost immediately after the baptism of the little Lady Marjorie, came the great rising of '15, led by the Earl of Mar, and which Lord Rowanbank, spite of the great age that might well have excused him from such efforts, thought it his duty to join; his loving young wife not attempting to hold him back, for, though she loved him right well, ‘yet loved she honour more.’ Poor girl! she lived to be thankful that her dear and honoured lord perished at Sheriffmuir, rather than by the axe of the executioner; the brave old soldier died a soldier’s death; and after some time his young widow retired with her baby girl, and her favourite stepdaughter, to her own house of Gowanbraes, attended and escorted thither by the Lord Hepburn, who, though he also had fought at Sheriffmuir with his faithful retainer David Hepburn,

had contrived, through the interest of friends, and on account of his youth, to escape the vengeance of the Government. He frequently visited the three ladies in their retirement, and the little Marjorie found that all the pleasures of the outer world which came to her, came through him. He it was who brought her quaint Dutch toys, and 'wooden babies' as dolls were then called. He trained and gave her her first pony, he taught her archery, he presented her with the newest-fashioned harpsichord, and with many of the little gauds and vanities dear to all girls' hearts.

A sweet and lovable maiden was the Lady Marjorie at fifteen; simple in heart and innocent in mind as one brought up in almost cloistered seclusion, which yet was rendered wholesome and natural by occasional intercourse with the outer world, ought to have been. She was healthy in mind and body, with a heart brave enough for any fate, and yet purely feminine in word and manner. Simply, innocently, and heartily, as such a girl would do, did she fall in love with Lord Hepburn, and accept his offer of marriage; but in good truth, did not herself know that her feeling for him was love in its technical and generally understood sense, until a rumour reached Gowanbraes that Lord Hepburn had met with a fearful accident, likely to prove fatal, that a tree had fallen upon him, crushing his back to such an extent that it was impossible that he could live.

'Madam, we must go to him at once—in an

hour's time!' cried Marjorie to her mother. 'I implore you let there be no delay.'

Not 'quite in an hour's time,' but very early the following morning, the heavy family coach was plodding along the deeply-rutted roads on the Inverness-shire side of Ennerleddie, whilst three or four armed servants, mounted on horseback, followed close behind. Presently the coachman came to a stop, and a gentleman, who had been riding rapidly towards the cavalcade, dismounted, and, coming up to the coach windows, showed himself to be Lord Hepburn. Marjorie fainted from excess of joy, and for a few minutes all was confusion. Water from a burn flowing conveniently near soon revived her, and then, the horses' heads having been turned back towards Gowanbraes, Lord Hepburn made the fourth in the coach, and told the whole and true story of the accident. He had been in a wood watching the felling of timber, and had been in imminent danger of being thrown down and crushed by a falling tree, but had been promptly pushed aside by his faithful follower, David Hepburn, who unfortunately had not managed altogether to save himself, for he had received a severe injury to the thigh and leg, and was now, Lord Hepburn said, in bed, suffering much, and therefore he must soon return to him—as soon in fact as he had seen the lady safely home.

'That is the second time that that good man has probably saved your life,' said the countess.

‘When was the other time?’ inquired Lady Marjorie.

‘When you were an infant, dear lady,’ replied her betrothed. ‘At Sheriffmuir he threw himself in front of me, and received the wound intended for me; and he was only eighteen then, a mere boy, who might well have been excused had he thought only of his own safety. Your honoured husband, Lady Rowanbank, did wisely in letting him always be my companion and share my childish pursuits and pleasures.’

‘Yes, my lord thought highly of him, only he regretted that he was not a Highlander.’

‘Ay, and that regret extended to myself. Alas! that my estates should only be on the borders of Inverness-shire, and that my family should not be genuinely Celtic.’

Lady Rowanbank smiled. ‘There are good people who are not Highlanders; but your excellent friend David is your distant kinsman, is he not? I think I have heard my lord say so.’

‘Yes, his father and my father were first cousins. My great-grandfather had an immense family; the daughters he contrived to marry well, but the younger ones among eight sons came off rather badly; so David’s father went abroad and served in French wars, coming home wounded and penniless, to be just barely provided for in a small outlying farm belonging to his father’s estate. He married, as might have been expected, beneath his birth-

station, and this son and one daughter were the result of the union. On his death-bed he begged my father to take care of his son. I, then a sickly, spoilt laddie of ten, took a strong fancy to the boy, who was somewhat younger, and he was brought to the castle. My father and mother died the following year, and my Lord Rowanbank continued their kindness to my favourite playmate. Of late years our different positions and interests have separated us somewhat; but still we are, as I hope we ever shall be, firmly attached friends.'

There were now no fears in Lord Hepburn's mind about the measure of his 'ladye love's' affection for him, for her extreme youth had caused him some misgivings, and in less than a year from that time the wedding took place; and shortly after, the pair had the satisfaction of settling David Hepburn into the employment he had chosen, for the lameness that the accident had left behind had prevented his entering upon farming life. Lady Marjorie was especially glad in being able to put him into her own house in Ennerleddie, allowing him the life-long use of it and its furniture.

Lord Hepburn and his wife had great joy in the birth of a son; but the rejoicings over his baptism were scarcely ended when the mourning for his death began. Then came the great rising of '45, in which Lord Hepburn took so active and conspicuous a part that he could not possibly hope for pardon from the Government; and after various hair-breadth escapes he contrived to reach France,

where in about a year's time his devoted wife, who had frequently defied his enemies or cleverly outwitted them, joined him. There two sons and two daughters were born to them; and there, after twelve years of exile and comparative poverty, the outlawed baron died, not an aged man, but worn out with grief and disappointment, not so much for the loss of home and lands and title (though on his children's account that also weighed on him), as at the conduct of his king and his king's son. Lady Marjorie remained in France until the early marriages of her daughters with French noblemen and the departure of her eldest son for India, when she returned to Scotland with her youngest child, and, settling in Edinburgh, maintained herself and him, and educated the latter upon her own slender means, until he also left her for India, where he found his brother in a good position, but in the first fresh grief of his early widowhood. One year's leave of absence had been spent by him in France to woo and wed an old love of his boyhood, who gladly accepted him, and brightened for three years his somewhat lonely Indian life. Shortly after his wife's death Major Hepburn (as he was then) sent home his little daughter to Lady Marjorie's care, sure that that care would be both judicious and tender; but it was not only for the welfare of the child (dear though that was to him) that he sent her home; it was also, with the view of her being an interest and comfort to his mother, for whose sake he saved money, and came home to expend



it in the purchase of a country house wherein she might comfortably and pleasantly pass her old age. A son so loving and dutiful need not have feared that a mother worthy of such love and devotion would refuse him any reasonable request; but the colonel, with all his soldier-hearted bravery and physical courage, was like many, nay, most high-born men, almost a coward, with righteous cowardice, when the wishes and feelings of women were concerned; he could not bear to run the risk of offending or hurting them, or even of opposing what he believed to be their wise and sensible judgment upon social and domestic matters.

A pretty picture to look upon was the Lady Marjorie Hepburn as her son entered her sitting-room and made his way quickly to her side; she was short of stature, and somewhat plump in figure, but neither the shortness nor the stoutness diminished aught of the gracious dignity which sat so well upon her. She had still a fresh colour upon cheeks as smooth as a girl's, and a keen, full eye with many changing expressions. Being in-doors, and in full dress in honour of her son's visit, her black brocaded train was not drawn up, but in all its great length swept the ground, whilst in front, the richly-quilted black satin petticoat was short enough to display the diamond-buckled and rosetted high-heeled shoes. Her bodice, cut open to the waist, was filled in to the very throat with folds of delicately fine cambric, edged with ruffles of Flanders lace, and fastened under the chin by a

miniature of her late husband set in pearls. Unlike many of the ladies of her time, she wore her own hair, which was carefully powdered (a matter of duty in her eyes), although sorrows and hardships had long ago turned its raven blackness into whiteness, touching in its suggestive beauty, and contrasting well with the strongly-marked eyebrows and peach-like skin; but not a great deal of the hair was visible under the high mob-cap, edged with lace and tied with a lavender-coloured ribbon, forming a large bow at the side of the head above the left ear; and nothing could be more beautiful than that tiny-curved and pink-lined ear, unadorned, or perhaps, it ought rather to be said, unspoilt by any jewelled pendant, indeed, she wore no ornaments, save the miniature before mentioned, and several antique and handsome rings on her beautiful hands, which, though they had in their time been busied in homely domestic toils, yet retained the plumpness of youth, and that velvety, substantial softness of touch which, even more than whiteness and shapeliness, is the marked characteristic of those hands which we are accustomed to call aristocratic. The owner of these particular hands was 'aristocratic' in every thought, feeling, and action of her life; but being genuinely and not artificially so, her high breeding was intensely charming—a something that pervaded her like a sweet odour, that all who approached her could inhale. At seventy, Lady Marjorie was as pure-hearted, though not as simple-minded, as she had been at sixteen, and with the

acquisition of worldly wisdom, incisive judgment, and power of management, she had also acquired not a little self-opinionativeness and belief in her own large experience, with a slight dictatorialness of speech and manner, softened and veiled only by her inbred courtesy and refinement.

When the ordinary talk of persons meeting after absence had passed between the mother and son, Lady Marjorie said—

‘I hope, my son, you were in time to be of use and comfort to our aged friend, David Hepburn?’

‘Alas, no, madam! he died two or three hours before I reached Ennerleddie. I assure you that was a great distress to me; but every fitting respect was paid to him in his funeral, the expenses of which I of course defrayed.’

‘Of course you did. Poor old David—puir auld body! I’m sorry he should have died with never a word of comfort or kindness from his master’s family; but his well-doing grandson, yon laddie, of whom our dear cousin Mr. Lindsay wrote so highly, and of whom auld Hamish is aye speaking to the bairn Marjorie; what of him? Have you been able to assist him?’

‘Yes, my dear mother; I ventured to take some property of yours wherewith to help him. Do you remember the old carved furniture in the Red House?’

‘Certainly, I mind of it well; but surely there’s none of it to the fore now?’

‘Ay, madam, those good people kept it sacredly,

considering it yours, and only a loan to them. I ventured to sell the greater part of it to Lord Cardross, who had happened to tell me that he was in search of such articles. I retained some small pieces—a cabinet, with nests within nests of drawers, a curiously-beautiful hand mirror, which I wonder should ever have been left there, and a writing-box, all of which I have brought down here for your ladyship, as I felt sure you would be glad to have them; but all the beds, chairs, and bureaus, in fact, all the household furniture and heavy cumbersome things which I could not have brought down here, Lord Cardross bought. We had them valued by a proper person, who considered them worth nearly three hundred pounds; and that sum I ventured to tell Stuart should be his own.'

'Ay, that's the laddie's name, Hamish says, and I like it; there's leal heartedness in that; there has'na been ony o' the name o' Hepburn that was na leal and true, and the most part of them faithful unto death—unto death, my son!'

'Truly, madam; and it is a pleasant consideration for us, the thought of that.'

'Pleasant! it's something mair than that; but I'm wandering frae my text. Ay, my son, I'm weel pleased that you should have done what you have done about the furniture. It was vera richt and proper, only it will no be enough; the young laddie should be looked after by us. What is he going to do?'

'Dear madam,' replied Colonel Hepburn, speak-

ing with a little quick catch of the breath which was and is a characteristic of the Hepburn family (as it is of many Scotch families), being reproduced in every generation, 'I have brought him with me; I hope, indeed, that you will not consider that I have been unwise, or over hasty, but I have promised to endeavour to get him a cadetship in the Bengal establishment; I was so touched with the nobility of his conduct, and his youth, and hardships; and he is of our own kin.'

'Ay, Kenneth, just that,' interposed the old lady; 'he is of our ain kin, and I for one am no blamin' you; his grandfather twice saved my lord's, your honoured father's, life, and it ill becomes you, my lord's son and mine, to think that *I* should be blamin' you for doing only what is your duty.'

'Pardon me, dear madam, I but feared that you might think that it was taking the lad out of his natural, proper position; but, indeed, he has all the thoughts and feelings of a gentleman; and that disreputable father of his has not been heard of for so many years that no doubt he is dead, and will be no trouble to him.'

'Of course the laddie is a gentleman; is na it in the blood o' him? That his grandfather should have been poor and obliged to work for his livin' didna alter the name and race that he came o'; and if it hadna been for our ain sair troubles, we would never have lost sight of him—honest man! and, indeed, as it is, I think shame that I didna take mair heed till him. I should like fine to see this

laddie you've been sae wise as to bring wi' you. Can ye no bid him come his ways up here ?'

Colonel Hepburn immediately brought Stuart, and then looking on critically and anxiously at the introduction, saw nothing to fear. The sight of the beautiful, little, old lady, called forth all the chivalry of Stuart's nature ; he was at once as much her slave as he was that of the younger Marjorie, and for the next three or four weeks he followed them both about with faithful devotedness, always on the watch to render them kindly little services, so unobtrusively done that sometimes they were scarcely aware they were being served.

## CHAPTER XIII.

'GRANDMOTHER, it's such a bonnie afternoon, will ye no come out, and take your tea in the Fog House? Stuart has pulled twa three berries in the garden, and we could sit and eat them and watch all along the road for father coming back from Edinburgh.'

So spoke the little Marjorie to her grandmother on the afternoon of a beautiful day in June, and her grandmother seemed not at all to dislike the proposition, though she half-playfully made one or two objections.

'Bairn, it's a stay-brae for my old back, yon where the fog-house stands.'

'Stuart's arm is vera strong, grannie, ever so strong, and he will help you up.'

'But I couldna sit upon those hard benches; I'd be needing my cushion, and my bit hassock.'

'Stuart will carry them up for you, madam, and have them a' ready for you before you get there; please do come. I have coaxed Tibbie, and she'll make the tea fine; and I've coaxed Hamish, and he'll make a bit fire under the big rock behind the fog-house; and I've coaxed Mistress Glass, and she's gien me plum bun and short-bread.'

‘And now you’re coaxing *me*. Well, wee wifie, I suppose I maun come, just to see that you dinna get into mischief.’

‘It’s no for that, grannie. I never get into mischief; besides, how could I wi’ Stuart and Hamish aye wi’ me?’

‘Just so. I’m wondering how it is that Mrs. Angus can spare Hamish to be aye rinning after you, and as for Stuart, it’s a constant puzzle to me how that laddie contrives to be at your beck and nod frae morning till night, and yet make such grand progress wi’ those Eastern tongues as your father tells me he does.’

‘Oh! he gets up fine an early i’ the mornings to study them, long before I’d be stirring,’ Marjorie replied so complacently and with such perfect unconsciousness of her own early-developed tyranny that her grandmother laughed a little amused laugh, and had not the heart to tell her that she was a self-pleasing bairn; and moved the more strongly to this reticence by the fact of Stuart’s appearance at that moment, carrying sundry plaids, a cushion, a hassock, and a small basket of strawberries peeping out in scarlet brightness from their protecting cabbage leaves. This basket Stuart confided to Marjorie with many injunctions to carefulness, and then, turning to the elder lady, he courteously offered his disengaged arm, which she accepted, glancing meaningly the while at his burdens; he, answering the look, said,

‘Oh, they are no weight, madam. I can manage



them quite well ; pray lean more heavily upon me, for the brae, though it's not high, is steep.'

Before the little party had gone half-way up the stay-brae they were met by Hamish, who relieved Stuart of some of the many things with which his right arm was encumbered, and then, going on before the others to the summer-house, he placed a comfortable resting-place for Lady Marjorie.

Mrs. Angus's house was close to the Den, in fact, the two properties 'marched' together, and Hamish, who was not in any sense considered as a servant or treated as such, although he was constantly rendering acts of service, was fond of using his liberty to go whither he would, by frequent, indeed almost daily visits to his favourite Stuart, and his nearly equally-loved and far-more-petted Marjorie.

Very thoroughly did the little company enjoy that afternoon's rustic feast ; Lady Marjorie, like many persons who have been called on to pass through great and real trials, had a capacity for the enjoyment of simple pleasures, and the well-spring of youthful lightheartedness kept ever bubbling up, and coming to the surface in bright sparkles of talk, and happy-sounding laughter. She had been at splendid entertainments in the French court, where her beauty, her rank, and her misfortunes had rendered her an idol of an hour ; but never had she so thoroughly enjoyed her natural feminine sovereignty over great statesmen and brave soldiers as she now enjoyed queening it over an old Highlander,

a young boy, and a little girl, each of whom vied with the other in obeying her lightest word, and anticipating her every want. There were such pure simple hearts in that little group that happiness was almost the necessary attendant upon the hour : when all were determined to find happiness in the simple means provided, happiness came ; and what might perhaps seem to us the elaborate ceremoniousness of their intercourse, the laboured politeness of every word and gesture, was really to them one of the strongest ingredients in their pleasure.

When the remains of the feast had been cleared away and Lady Marjorie had resumed her knotting work, the little girl coiling herself up on the bench in some wonderful attitude peculiar to childhood, and hugging her wooden baby in her arms said,

‘And now, please, grandmother, will you be so kind as to tell us a story ?’

‘A story, bairn ! you have heard all that I have to tell, over and over again ; and you must be tired of them by this time.’

‘But I’m not, grannie ; besides, Stuart has not heard them.’

‘Stuart would’na be caring for my auld world clavers.’

‘He just would ; he has told me many a story that he used to hear from Mr. Lindsay, and ane was sic a bonny tale, about how the fisher wives brought their wee bairns to the windows of the Rockhaven prison to be baptized by him when the naughty people shut him up there.’

‘Eh, me! I’d like fine to hear that; will ye tell it to us, Stuart?’

Stuart complied with the old lady’s request, and told the beautiful story as nearly as possible in Mr. Lindsay’s words; but Hamish noiselessly withdrew himself out of hearing, and sat down outside the fog-house; he could not even yet hear his dear master spoken of and preserve his own calmness. When Stuart had finished, and Lady Marjorie had shown her warm interest in the recital, May said,

‘Now, grannie, do tell us the story of the hidden chamber, and how your mother came to be married to my Lord Rowanbank?’

‘Well, it is rather a strange story; and as Stuart’s ane o’ the family, and Hamish no to be called a stranger, I dinna object to telling it, though ill-natured folk might be seeing some blame to her ladyship, my mother, in it. Ye maun ken, Stuart, that the countess, my mother, before her marriage was Mistress Beatrix Muirison. She was educated in Paris, and was often at S. Germain with our late honoured queen, after whom she was named, and with the Princess Louisa, for her parents had gone to France shortly after the royal exiles; and they died there, within a few months of each other, when my mother was still quite a girl, not seventeen years of age; she had some siller and her property of Gowanbraes, but she had no brothers or sisters, nor any near relatives; she had one favourite and dear schoolfellow, the Lady Mary Farquhar, and to the care of her father, the Earl of Rowanbank, who

came over to fetch her from school a week before Sir James Muirison's death, she was entrusted. Lord Rowanbank, though then over seventy years of age, was as youthful in heart and manner, in everything but looks, as a man of twenty; and even in looks he was wonderfully youthful, having always enjoyed perfect health. How he had managed to escape the persecution of the Government for the part he took at Killiecrankie, I know not, I suppose he owed his safety greatly to the lonely and well-defended position of his castle, far away up in the fastnesses of western Ross-shire, and to the knowledge that he had numbers of clansmen whom he could call to his defence at any moment. This old gentleman, who had by this time married all his sons and daughters except Lady Mary, was delighted at the prospect of having two young women in his castle, and therefore an excuse for plenty of merry making. My mother told me that they had many curious adventures on their way to Scotland, and to that far away castle that stood, and stands now, only alas in ruins, on a high rocky island in the middle of a rapid mountain river, navigable only in parts; but, it would be ower lang to tell you of all those; it's enough to say that they all got safe to Rowanbank castle, and that a very happy life for the young people began; what rides and walks and boatings and shooting expeditions they had! What torchlight dances, and gatherings in the great hall, and many another ploy besides! Many a young chieftain came to that ever-open

house, and many a one admired my mother; but she cared for none of them all so well as for Lord Rowanbank, who was as gallant a partner in the dance and as light of foot as the youngest amongst them. It was grand, my mother said, to see him in the full evening dress of a Highland Chieftain standing at the head of a long line of dancers, ready to begin the reel o' "Tulloch."

'After my mother had been at the castle rather more than a year, she happened, one day in early autumn, to be sitting in one of the deep window-recesses of the room called the Library, when Lord Rowanbank came in, and, after carefully closing the door behind him, looked round the apartment with a furtive and yet searching look; she was sure that he did this, and equally sure, until subsequent events proved her to have been mistaken, that he saw her. Being sure that he saw her, she did not consider that there could be any objection to her remaining in the room, although the next things that he did were to take up part of a square Turkey rug that covered a portion of the oak floor, push aside a small writing-table, and going down upon his knees, put what appeared to her to be a key into a hole in one of the boards, and then after lifting up a trap-door, he disappeared from her sight, the door closing behind him as noiselessly as it had been opened. My mother was greatly surprised at all these proceedings, never having had a suspicion of the existence of this trap-door and hidden chamber, although the secret of another

place of concealment in quite another part of the castle had been revealed to her. She fully intended to ask Lord Rowanbank all about it as soon as he should ascend to the library, for he was not at all a formidable person, and she was also under the impression that he was fully aware of her presence, and had not spoken only to avoid loss of time ; but no sooner had he ascended, and the trap-door had closed, than some one knocked loudly for admittance at the outer door of the room. Lord Rowanbank thrust the little key which he had held in his hand into his waistcoat pocket (evidently not venturing to spend time in locking the hidden door), hastily drew the Turkey rug over the boards, and then bending down to the writing-table whilst using some of its materials, called out, "Come in."

'A note which was brought to him seemed to be important. He asked the man if any one waited for an answer, and, being told yes, immediately left the room, and, after a few minutes of waiting for him to return, my mother heard him ride out of the court-yard. Now, as I think, and as she afterwards thought, began her wrong-doing ; but we maun mind that she had been made entirely one of the family, that she had never heard of any mysteries, or secrets, and had seemed to have received the full confidences of the earl and his daughter ; at any rate, she went and lifted up the Turkey rug and tried the trap-door. As it was not locked she easily raised it, and saw a short flight of rather steep stairs, at the bottom of which was a square

room dimly lighted by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. At first she hesitated about going down those stairs, but she was only a lassie, and the temptation seemed irresistible, and the door was so light and easy to lift that there was no apparent danger; so she went down, and the door closed above her as it had closed above the earl, not noiselessly this time, however, but with a little sharp click which she was too engrossed by her curiosity to notice at the time, and did not take any heed to until later. After all, as is usual, doubtless, in such cases of unlawful curiosity, there was nothing in the little room to reward her search; a few old-fashioned weapons, two or three bright swords, and a couple of heavy cabinets into which of course she neither could nor would have looked, were all that she found; and as she stood still in the middle of the floor so thickly carpeted as to deaden every foot-fall, and heard the plash and ripple of the waters of the river flowing close beneath the walls of the castle, she felt that she had had quite enough of the eerie place, and prepared to ascend the stairs, and push up the trap-door. I daresay, laddie, you can guess what is to come, and May there kens weel eneuch all about it; the door would not open, push and push as she might, it was motionless under her little hands; but it was long before she realised the full danger and horror of her position; all at once it flashed upon her memory that at breakfast that morning (which already seemed to her to have been such a weary,

long while ago) she had heard the earl say that he was going that afternoon to ride to "The Haugh," the seat of a friend of his, to spend a few days there. Perhaps no one in the house but the earl knew of this secret chamber, and if he should not return for days, what might not be her horrible fate? She knocked with all her force against the door; but the sturdy oaken boards seemed to give back but a faint sound; and she remembered all too well that the library was a room seldom used by any of the family except herself and the earl, the only two members of the household who cared for reading and writing. It did not open into any other apartment, nor had it any communication with the general living rooms of the castle, being in fact the ground floor of a separate wing, the second storey of which consisted of unoccupied, and partially-furnished sleeping chambers. Almost wild with terror, my poor mother paced up and down the floor of her cell, as if it were only in motion that she could find any comfort; and her misery would have been terribly increased had she known that her friend, Lady Mary Farquhar, had just at that moment entered the library in search of her, and that her eye having been attracted by the disorderly state of the rug she had stooped to try the trap-door, and on finding it firmly shut had replaced and smoothed the rug; and that she had then left the room, closing the ponderous door behind her.

'Lord Rowanbank went, as he had intended, to



"The Haugh," reaching it late in the afternoon; he spent a particularly merry evening with a number of gentlemen friends, and was not to say early in getting to his bed; and now, bairns, comes the really wonderful part of the story; and it shows us that we should never be too quick to settle the ways in which it may please Almighty God to work, for He has many and divers fashions of getting His will done, and whiles He chooses fashions that we puir creatures may make little count of, and set small store by. Lord Rowanbank went to his bed, and he dreamed a dream; a very remarkable dream indeed; he found himself in the secret chamber underneath the library in his own castle, and crouching at the foot of the trap-door stairs he saw Mistress Beatrice Muirison with her bit hands clutching at the hair hanging loose about her white, troubled face; he woke in a fright, and he blamed the whisky for the ill dream, turned his pillow, and fell asleep, only to dream the self-same dream again; a third time this happened, and Lord Rowanbank was too true a Highlander to lie still in his bed after the thrice repeating of such a dream; he rose, dressed, went to the stables, knocked up one of the men, and as soon as his horse could be saddled, hastened off on the six-mile ride, arriving at his castle in the early dawning, to find the whole large household in confusion, and to be met in the hall by his daughter drowned in tears, and scarcely able to speak.

"Oh! my lord," she sobbed out, "Beatrix is

lost, we cannot find her anywhere, and I'm feared that she must be drowned."

'His lordship, although he had ridden home in such hot haste, had not until that moment exactly believed in his dream; now he was sure of its truth, and dismissing the attendants, took his daughter aside and leading her to the library, told her his dream. Her first answering words perplexed him sorely.

"Oh! my lord, your dream was but an idle one, for yesterday forenoon I came in here to look for Beatrix, she being ever one to hide amongst the books. I knew you had meant to put away papers in the secret cellar, and thus, perhaps, my attention was attracted to the disordered appearance of the rug; I stooped down, and by touching the door, found that the spring had gone to, which of course you had done before going away on your ride."

"But I did not, lassie; I had time only to shut the door before David Hepburn brought me a message from his young lord; and I can swear to it that the spring was not down when I left it, for as you know it aye shuts with a click. No, no, Mary, the poor young lady went down, and not knowing the secret pressed her hands against the place where the spring starts from, and so sent it up."

"But, father," cried Lady Mary, "it is quite impossible that Beatrix should have gone down there, for she did not even guess at the existence of that cellar. I have told her all my own secrets;

but, I did not think it fair or lawful to tell her yours, my lord."

"Quite right, my lady; but nevertheless, spite of your discreet silence, I believe that she discovered the secret, and is in this cellar. Poor lassie! caught in a trap indeed; I only trust that her reason has not deserted her, for the fright must have been sore."

'The calmness of my mother's manner, when first found, and released from her gloomy prison, excited Lord Rowanbank's admiration; but before night-fall she was dangerously ill with some fever on the brain, and often in the days that followed Lady Mary had to call in the earl's help in holding down and quieting the poor raving girl; from some of these ravings Lord Rowanbank learnt how dear he was to Mistress Beatrix, and discovered that her great fear and sorrow were lest she should have forfeited his good opinion by her indulgence in idle curiosity: and even when reason returned, she was so melancholy on that head that it was quite necessary he should try and comfort her, and the comforting ended in his asking her to be his wife, to the great joy of Lady Mary and all his sons and daughters. On her eighteenth birthday, Mistress Beatrix was married to one of whom, to her dying day, she always spoke as the noblest nobleman and the kindest gentleman she had ever seen or heard of. And what a wedding it was!'

'Yes, please, grannie,' interrupted little May, 'tell us about it, about the torch-light dance, and the row on the river and the bringing home the

royal stag, and all ; do, my lady, for Stuart never heard such a bonnie tale.'

The old Lady Marjorie, nothing loth, complied, and so the pleasant afternoon wore away, and there were but few more of such remaining for Stuart ; for that very evening Colonel Hepburn brought out the news that they two, he and Stuart, must set sail for India early in September, and they would need be two or three weeks in London before that ; so almost every hour of the following six weeks was counted as a precious thing, and was laid away in Stuart's memory as one lays some fragrant leaf or herb, that all one's surroundings may catch and emit the sweet pleasantness of its perfume.

## PART II.

### How the How was Kept.



#### CHAPTER I.

THE earthly life of each individual of the human race bears much resemblance to an ancient Roman pavement of mosaic work. An intricate pattern composed of innumerable small morsels of coloured stones, which would not only be incomplete, but also marred in its beauty were one of the smallest of those morsels wanting; yet important to the beauty of the whole pattern as we know each of these atoms to be, we take little interest in each by itself, and would indeed be wearied were we compelled to study each separately. Thus it is with us in looking at a life (which has been lived out), of one of our fellow-beings; we know the necessary importance that the veriest trifles had in its formation, but yet prefer to view the life as a whole, or at least in large portions composed of many days and many small events.

Though each year and day sent by Stuart Hepburn in India bore its effects upon his character and the

chief aim of his life, it would afford us little interest to follow out in detail those twelve years which have passed since we saw him sitting in the Fog-house of 'The Den' gardens, listening to Lady Marjorie Hepburn's old-world stories.

In those twelve years Stuart had passed from boyhood into the early flush of youth, and from that again into the ripeness and prime of manhood, yet to General Hepburn and others who had known him during all those years they had seemed to have wrought little change. Not in that which *was* Stuart; his character seemed the same steadfast, upright, self-forgetful character that it had ever been; externally there were differences. From being of merely moderate height he had grown into a noticeably tall man; ladies given to exaggeration called him 'a giant,' and already, chiefly because of that great height, and in spite of soldierly training, there was a slightly perceptible carrying forward of the naturally falling shoulders. As men in those days wore no beards, there was nothing to hide the still youthful contour of the face; but its former ruddiness had now settled into decided bronze, tinged on either high cheek-bone with 'Catherine-pear' redness; the eyes were as blue as ever, but darkened by the thicker growth of brows and lashes, and already lines of care and fatigue had formed themselves about their corners. At first the climate had tried him sorely, for though his early life had trained him to endure cold and privation, it had not fitted him to thrive physically in great heat and almost enforced

luxuriousness of life. Nevertheless, after the first painful effects had worn off, his early habits of self-repression and self-denial did aid greatly in preventing him from succumbing to enervation, and from multiplying needless luxuries.

Great things had been expected from Stuart from his first arrival in the Presidency, for at the moment of that arrival his name was in every mouth as that of the 'boy hero,' he himself being the only person astonished at his fame. The ship in which he and Colonel Hepburn had sailed from England had been wrecked near Madagascar, and when the boats had been lowered for the escape of as many of the crew and passengers as they could hold, Stuart, seeing only one vacant place in the last of them, had drawn back and compelled Colonel Hepburn to take it, withdrawing himself so-determinedly that time could not be spent to search for him. Two of the three boats were never again heard of; the one into which Colonel Hepburn had been almost thrust, against his will, was picked up by a vessel on her way to the East Indies, and he mourned sincerely for Stuart as for one gone for ever from his earthly sight. But in the meantime, Stuart, two or three sailors, and the captain of the vessel, had gathered together all their energies, and entrusted themselves to a rude raft, which was not long after surrounded and conveyed to Madagascar by a boat-load of native inhabitants of that island, where they had been detained several months, and had not had exactly a pleasant time of it; but their past troubles seemed as nothing when

they were rescued from their dreary captivity by an English vessel and carried to Calcutta. Colonel Hepburn's joy at seeing Stuart again had been great, and as he had kept neither it nor his gratitude a secret, and as Stuart's companions in misfortune spoke loudly of his courage, his kindness, and his helpfulness, it was little marvel that Stuart had become a nine days' hero, and had entered upon his new life with a prestige of well-deserved fame. He had done nothing particularly wonderful since, nothing strikingly brilliant, though military men knew that he was a thorough soldier, one who not only loved his profession, but who studied it in its various bearings, knowing it theoretically and practically. In the various greater or lesser engagements against native princes which had taken place at different times, he had so conducted himself according to the gradations of rank he had held at those times as a man in each rank should have done, and was allowed by his brother officers to have earned the promotion that had followed some of those engagements. He had gained rather more than common distinction for his knowledge of various native languages and dialects, and that knowledge had been on many occasions of great use and value to the Company, and had gained him some of its most remunerative appointments as interpreter and secretary. Notwithstanding this well-established and deserved reputation, Major Hepburn (as he now was) was not a popular man either in his own regiment, or in general society. A few young men to



whom he had shown kindness spoke of him with gratitude, and ladies liked his diffident yet chivalrous courtesy; but by the majority of his compeers, he was considered stiff and formal, and worse than all, 'close-handed'; his Scotch stinginess was a favourite joke amongst them, and even General Hepburn, though he knew the secret motive of his economy, yet thought that he sacrificed too much to that motive, and was too indifferent to the lawful requirements of his position. The scene in which once again, after twelve years, we find Stuart, was different in all respects from that in which we last saw him. The time was an evening in early autumn, and the place a room in a private bungalow not far from the Calcutta barracks; the jalousies were open, and near one of them were seated two men, the elder of whom, General Hepburn, was leaning back wearily in a reclining chair, and looking the invalid he had been for some time past; but the cooler evening was exercising a reviving influence, and his companion Stuart, feeling less anxious concerning him than he had done even that morning, did not attempt to prevent him from talking over some private business matters which he seemed to wish to have arranged. The chief subject of conversation was Marjorie, who, after the death of her grandmother two years before this time, had come out to India, and who was now absent with her uncle, Judge Hepburn, and his wife, on an expedition to Rajh Mahl Hills, a low range about one hundred miles from Calcutta; but she was, as her father and Stuart hoped, about to return home,

the latter having written some days previously to the Judge acquainting him with the General's increased illness.

'Of course Marjorie must remain here in India with her uncle and aunt,' General Hepburn was saying. 'I have no one in Scotland to whom I could send her now that my dear mother is gone, and she could not go to any of our French relations, France being in such a terribly unsettled state; indeed, it is doubtful whether my poor old sister be alive, or where any of my nephews and nieces may be, so she must remain here, although I don't mind telling you, Stuart, that my brother's wife is not exactly the woman in whose care I would choose to leave my girl if I could help myself.'

Stuart was silent for a moment, and then said, hesitatingly—

'Mrs. Hepburn is certainly worldly minded.'

'Worldly minded to a degree, of the earth, earthy!' replied the General with energy. 'How two sisters could be so unlike each other as she and my precious Helen I cannot comprehend; but to be sure, my wife was many years her sister's senior, and was brought up in an old-fashioned French country house, whereas Cecilia was bred in Paris, never a good school for a young girl.'

Stuart felt ill-disposed to say much about Mrs. Hepburn, for he had received little kindness from her; in fact, she was almost the only person of his acquaintance who had the power to make him feel uncomfortable, and in whose presence he could not

help remembering that he had not been born in the social station which he now held ; yet she never so far forgot herself as to be discourteous to him, she was even too ceremonious, and made him feel that she considered him an inferior even whilst she was outwardly treating him with marked and elaborate politeness. Remembering these things, Stuart was silent, until, perceiving that some answer was expected of him, he said—

‘I think Mrs. Hepburn will be kind to her niece?’

‘Kind, oh yes! there are few well-bred people out of old ballads and modern romances who are unkind to young orphans; but she will endeavour to fill the girl’s mind with her own worldly sentiments, and marry her for rank and wealth, not in the least for love’s sake.’

‘Nay, we will hope better things. I do not think that Miss Hepburn will ever give herself to any one who is not good and estimable, and riches and rank in themselves are no drawbacks where there are things more solid below them.’

‘That is an evident truism, my boy!’ The General mused a while, thinking how willingly he would give his daughter to Stuart, if Stuart would evince any desire for such a gift; but as he did not, it was impossible to let fall the lightest hint as to his own paternal wishes. After some minutes of doubtful thought, he did venture to say, ‘I am sure that the woman whom you will marry will be one whom you can esteem as well as love.’

‘I do not suppose that I shall ever marry,’ replied

Stuart, a little colour rising to his cheek. 'I do not see how marriage would be possible with the project that you know of; it would be unfair to marry a woman and not give her all my worldly substance.'

'You might find a woman willing to co-operate in your scheme.'

'Who would give her fortune to it, and ask for none of mine? I should not like that, neither would it be in any sense a just and lawful proceeding.'

'But you do not intend to give all that you may become possessed of to that charity?'

'No, not all. If my speculations succeed as they have hitherto, and if I can continue to save money proportionately to increasing means, I hope to have, at the end of twenty years, a capital of ninety, or a hundred thousand pounds. I have made inquiries, and ascertained that sixty thousand would build and fitly endow such a hospital for the young and the aged as I wish to see established in Ennerleddie. Then, I should desire, as an act of justice, to give ten or fifteen thousand pounds to this country in which my money will have been made—if it ever be made—for the building of a church and the promotion of missionary efforts, trusting that by that time the Company will have withdrawn its evil objections to what it is pleased to call proselytising.'

General Hepburn had listened to this, perhaps the longest speech that Stuart had ever made in social conversation, with wonder at the plain un-

hesitating statements, and he felt that the man who at twenty-eight years of age could so confirm the vow made at fifteen, would probably be enabled to carry out his well-considered purposes, and that at any rate nothing but death, or a long course of pecuniary misfortunes, would have any power to prevent his persistent endeavours to carry them out. His own heart glowed with admiration, and yet he could not help regretting more than ever that such a man could not be the husband of his daughter; full of this thought, he deviated a little from his own punctilious code, and said—

‘Those are noble plans and hopes, Stuart; God grant that you may be able to bring them to a good end! But you might find a lady with means sufficient for your private family needs, so as to allow of your devoting the greater part of your own fortune as you have planned. If I were you, I would make no resolution against marriage.’

‘Indeed, I shall do no such thing! One vow, besides the baptismal responsibilities, is surely enough for any one man. I only hope that it may not be too much for me.’

‘No fear of that, as we Scotch folk phrase it; you will not refuse then to be guided by circumstances?’

‘That I hope I shall never do, for it seems to me that circumstances are designed in order to show us our duty, and we are bound to follow their guiding. I wish to be so guided; not to be daunted by small obstacles, and yet to be willing

to give up my own way if real hindrances should occur; but now for nearly thirteen years, no hindrances have arisen; on the contrary, every event and circumstance has helped the carrying out of my purpose; do you not yourself think so, General?’

‘Yes, in many respects I think with you; you have earned promotion, and gained money—the two best possible aids to your project; but you must own that you have not put yourself in the way of otherwise altering your position; you have not taken opportunities of marriage, for instance.’

‘Pardon me, dear sir, I do not think that any such have presented themselves to be taken up; certainly I have not gone about looking for any. Neither will I ever do so, for that I think would not be consistent with the obligation that I am under.’

‘Well, but if you do meet with a woman able and willing to join in your benevolent scheme, and also to bless your life by her love, I hope that you will allow yourself to accept such blessing and help?’

‘Yes, General, if such good gifts ever come within my reach, I will accept them.’

‘That is as it should be; and, Stuart—’ here the General spoke hesitatingly, ‘if the lady you love be highly born, you will not allow yourself to fancy that any past circumstances can have at all unfitted you for union with such a one; forgive me for speaking so plainly. You know my state, and my nearness to another, and I trust a better, life, may

perhaps excuse me for speaking out my mind to one whom I love and value as I love and value you.'

'My dear kind friend, pray say to me what you will; it can be nothing but kindness ever to be remembered.'

'Thank you; then you will not allow any Quixotic notions regarding the past to be a hindrance to your happiness?'

'No, sir, I do not think that the lady whom I could love would regard my humble birth as a hindrance to my telling her of my love.'

'I am satisfied. I think that any woman ought to be glad to have your affection, and any father thankful to see his girl united to you.'

The talk between the two men gradually merged itself into other channels, and this particular part of it did not recur to Stuart's memory until many months later, not until after the General's death, for, notwithstanding the tender care and nursing given him by his daughter, and by the son of his love, General Hepburn's illness increased, and after six weeks in which he suffered more from weakness than actual pain, he died in Stuart's arms. Not by any means an old man, having only just passed his fifty-first birthday, but one who had had an eventful life, and who, though deprived of his birth-right title was a true nobleman, and not unworthy to have been the sixteenth, and at that time, the last Baron Hepburn, of Hepburn—a race ever distinguished for its loyalty, its bravery, and honest integrity of heart and life. One of the wisest as

well as the best of General Hepburn's many good deeds was the uplifting of Stuart from poverty and obscurity, and placing him in a position in which he might add another laurel to the many honours of the ancient house of which he was a humble scion, and which had not been ashamed to acknowledge him as such. Stuart knew well what he owed to the General, to whom, to the latest hour of his life, he rendered loving and filial service, and of whom, after his death, he ever spoke as his benefactor, and as the friend who, after his grandfather and Mr. Lindsay, stood before all other men in his affectionate reverence and regard.



## CHAPTER II.

IN real life, it frequently happens that a long period of comparatively uneventful years is succeeded by a shorter period of time crowded with events following one upon another with such marvellous and bewildering rapidity that the long previous years seem almost nothing in comparison with the time fraught with so many interests, that it ever after stands out as one of the landmarks in life's history. Such a period had come to Stuart in his fourteenth year, after the quiet and unthinking heedlessness of childhood; and such began to dawn upon him at the time of General Hepburn's death. That in itself was an important event to him, but it was immediately followed by others of greater importance in their effect upon his inner, as well as his outer, life. A time of fiery trial drew near, a time of testing whether or not he was worthy to carry out a noble purpose. One evening, five or six months after General Hepburn's death, Major Hepburn was returning to Calcutta from a small up-country station to which he had been sent upon military business. He was riding with another officer at the head of a little troop of horse and

foot soldiers, and after enforced rest in tents during the past hot hours of the day, was enjoying the cool air and free motion, when suddenly he drew rein, and said, 'Do you hear those cries? Surely some one is in distress.'

'Where? I hear nothing,' replied the lieutenant, smiling slightly, for Major Hepburn's quickness of hearing was a standard joke in the regiment, the younger men being apt to say that Scotchmen were always hearing sounds and seeing sights which no one else could hear or see.

'Where! There in that jungle to the right. Don't tell me you can't hear *that!*'

'That' being an unmistakeable shriek undoubtedly human was heard by the lieutenant and the foremost amongst the men. A word of command to follow, and the company left the main path to strike into the jungle where no one ought to have been at that hour, there being no road through it to any place. They soon discovered a traveller surrounded by thieves, who were aided in their attack by some of his own servants, for whom the others who remained faithful were no match. So busily engaged were the villains in their evil work that they did not immediately perceive the approach of the soldiers, but ere these could reach the scene of action, the alarm was given, and with the low, stifled cry of disappointed rage, which once heard from Indian lips is never forgotten by those who hear it, first one and then another rushed into the shelter of the tangled jungle wood, followed by the

soldiers, who, venturing as far as they dared, succeeded in making prisoners of four or five of the band, whilst the two officers turned their attention to the wounded bearers, and to the traveller, whom they had difficulty in extricating from his overturned palanquin; they found him at first insensible, but he soon awoke to the consciousness of acute pain from injuries to his back and legs, one of which was broken. The officers recognised him to be Mr. Reynolds, a merchant who had lately arrived in Calcutta from the Madras Presidency, and who was understood to be marvellously rich, even for that country and that date when Europeans constantly amassed large fortunes. Major Hepburn caused Mr. Reynolds to be placed on a quickly extemporised litter, and carried at a foot's pace, until the halt for the night was given, the watch fires lighted, and the tents put up, then he was laid in the Major's own bed, and waited upon by the Major himself, who, with the aid of one of the men skilled in simple native surgery, did all that could at that time be done for him; but at day-break, when the camp had to start again on its march, it was found that Mr. Reynolds could not possibly be moved, inflammation having greatly increased. After consultation with his lieutenant, Stuart decided to leave him, and a sufficient number of men for protection, whilst he himself and the remainder of the party should make a 'forced march,' to present themselves at head-quarters, and from thence send back a surgeon. When Stuart

communicated this decision to Mr. Reynolds, he was amazed by that gentleman's childishly passionate entreaties that he would not leave him.

'I cannot remain, my dear sir, or believe me I would gladly do so.'

'And why cannot you? What hinders you?'

'My duties. I was sent from Calcutta on special business, and it is necessary that I return thither with all speed to give an account of what I have done.'

'But it cannot be your duty to leave a fellow-being in a helpless condition to be set upon perhaps by another gang of those black devils; your masters can't require that of you.'

'Certainly not that I should leave you in any danger. I leave you in good hands. Mr. Jeffreys will take every—'

'I don't want Mr. Anybody; hang it all,' interrupted the old man. 'I want you.'

'But I cannot remain with you. I dare not neglect duty and disobey orders.'

'You dare not; that's because you live by that beggarly soldiering, and can't afford to throw away your bread; never mind, I'll make it worth your while to save me; I can buy your pardon from old John Company; never fear that!'

Stuart looked at the old man for a moment without speaking, and only his age, his white hairs, and his suffering, prevented the look from being one of unutterable contempt; as it was, Mr. Reynolds's eyes fell beneath it, although the slowly-dropped

words of reply were only—‘I fear that you must be very ill, or you could not have said such a thing, and I am all the more sorry that I must leave you.’

‘Oh! I meant no harm!’ cried Mr. Reynolds, clutching Stuart’s hand with childish vehemence; ‘only, do stay with me, or at least come back—couldn’t you do that?’

‘I will endeavour to do that. Indeed I may promise to do so, subject of course to there being no contrary orders at head-quarters. I will return with all possible speed, and bring a surgeon with me, or send one if I cannot return.’

Stuart found himself able to return, and met the party carrying the wounded man into a Cantonment, the chief official of which gave up his own dwelling for his use and that of his attendants. For some days Mr. Reynolds’s state was critical, but by care and skill he was pulled through, and his gratitude to Stuart was so genuine that it would have touched a harder heart than his. As Mr. Reynolds grew better, his attendants found that he was an intelligent man, who, having travelled much, had made good use of his opportunities of acquiring practical knowledge. He had amassed his immense fortune in many countries and by many means; not objecting to relate some of these, he let fall hints which Stuart asked permission to store for his own future use. Once, when eager in conversation concerning a successful speculation, his tone struck Stuart’s ear, always sensitive to every tone and shade of accent.

‘Why,’ he exclaimed, ‘you said that exactly as a north-country Scotchman would do. Yet you cannot be Scotch with that name.’

There was a moment’s pause before the answer, lightly and carelessly given, came.

‘Then I must have caught the accent from you, my young friend, for you are unmistakably Scotch.’

‘I hope so,’ replied Stuart a little hotly, for, sensible though he was, he could be ruffled by what seemed the lightest slight upon his country, for which he had a good man’s righteous love. The surgeon, knowing Stuart’s amiable weakness, as he deemed it, changed the conversation, and Stuart remained under the impression that Mr. Reynolds had disclaimed connection with Scotland; therefore he was the more startled, two or three nights later, when in a paroxysm of suffering Mr. Reynolds let fall, in Gaelic, a hasty expression in use amongst Highlanders in times of pain and annoyance. Stuart exclaimed, ‘My dear sir, where did you learn those words?’ and he repeated them.

‘Well, what of them?’

‘They are Gaelic, and you—’

‘Gaelic?’ interrupted Mr. Reynolds with a laugh. ‘Your head must be full of that beggarly country of yours, when you actually imagine a Cingalese oath to be some confounded bit of Gaelic gibberish. And you told me yourself that you were not a Highlander.’

‘No, our family is not purely Celtic, although it is counted as part of a clan, and has its own colours ;

but I lived on the borders of Highland counties, and had opportunities of learning Gaelic, which I know thoroughly—as also I do Cingalese.’ These last words were said with marked emphasis.

‘Confound you!’ just escaped Mr. Reynolds’s lips, to be crushed down by a laugh, and ‘Well! well! We citizens of the world see so many people and pick up so many different tongues, that I, not being such a linguist as you are, may easily have caught up half-a-dozen expressions in as many different languages, and not know to which of them each belongs.’

Stuart was silent, and the surgeon, divining that something was amiss, presently rose, and after making some excuse, left the room.

## CHAPTER III.

As soon as Dr. Vicars was gone, Mr. Reynolds, raising himself upon his elbow, motioned to Stuart to draw nearer, and said, in low, agitated tones, 'I beg you not to misunderstand me. Now that we are alone, I am willing to acknowledge that I was in Scotland in my youth, and that I have such unpleasant memories of the time spent there that I try to forget all about it; yet, as there were some persons there whom I loved and valued, I like, rather than otherwise, the fact of your being a Scotchman. Do not think hardly of me, I beg of you.'

'It is not my place to do that, sir, and of course you have a right to preserve your own secrets, but cannot that be done by any of us without involving oneself in contradictory statements?'

'Well, perhaps so. I shall endeavour to be more careful in the future; and may I ask you to let what I have told you remain a secret from other people?'

'Certainly, I shall not mention it; but I regret that you should have unpleasant memories of my native land.'



Mr. Reynolds was given to romancing, and these words opened to him a floodgate of temptation which, so habitual had been his yielding to such, he really was now unable to resist. He poured forth a story of griefs and wrongs, love affairs, and love disappointments, scarcely one word of which had foundation in truth. Stuart felt uncomfortable whilst he listened, for 'the coin did not ring true'; but he blamed himself for his doubts, and 'believed all things,'— 'thinketh no evil' constantly recurred to his memory. On the whole the impression left on his mind was one of pity, and he assured himself that this old man's faults were the result of bad education rather than of natural evil disposition.

Even after Mr. Reynolds had been brought back to Calcutta, he continued to suffer much and to be quite an invalid, exacting kindness and attention from Stuart, who gave them, to the amusement of the regiment, which had not often had the pleasure of laughing at him. 'A regular old man's nurse,' 'Can't keep himself out of a sick room,' 'Loves the smell of physic'—so laughed the jesters, little guessing how early and painfully he at whom they jested had served his apprenticeship to this occupation of tending the sick and aged which he had now once again taken up, because it lay in his path to be taken up. Through all his length of days he neither speculated about his duties nor created any for himself, but simply and trustingly took up all which presented themselves to him, and performed them to the best of his power, finding honest

pleasure and satisfaction therein; for he had none of that terrible, almost blasphemous, asceticism which has led some unhappy souls to warn themselves and others against taking any delight in their duties, and even against the performance of certain good works if they do afford gladness. To such faithless souls there can be no meaning in the words written by the inspiration of God, of God's feeling concerning the works of His creation—'for His pleasure they are, and were created.'

Stuart did not find Mr. Reynolds an agreeable companion, yet believing the kindly care of him to be a duty clearly put in his way, he found pleasure in the duty itself, and, undeterred by the echoes which reached his ears of the amusement of his comrades, he spent much of his time in Mr. Reynolds's splendidly appointed house at Garden Reach, where he was ever welcome, although he frequently had to bear reproaches for not being there oftener, and for 'neglecting a poor, helpless old man.'

Other thoughts than those about Mr. Reynolds began to occupy Stuart's heart and mind. He had found out, with a glad thrill of surprise, that for thirteen years he had, unconsciously to himself, loved Marjorie Hepburn; the pity which he felt for her revealed to him this fact. Whilst she had been happy in her father's affection the feeling of passionate love had slumbered; now it had rushed forth in full life and strength on noting her sorrowful face, and drooping, listless air, and on becoming

convinced that she was not, and never would be, happy in her new home. As the General had foretold, there was no unkindness shown to her; on the contrary, she received much attention, and indulgence that might have spoiled a differently natured girl, but could not spoil Marjorie because she felt its hollowness. The hollowness of her aunt's daily and hourly life was a trial to the high-principled, somewhat realistic Scotchwoman. All that Mrs. Hepburn did was done for effect; her first object in life was to shine before the world, her second to hide from her husband the means by which she accomplished her first object. To deceive and blind him was a business of her daily life, and so carefully did she study each detail of this business that she fully succeeded, and her husband, an upright man, true all through, as the Hepburns had ever been, believed her to be the most simple-minded, honest-hearted woman in the world—not very wise certainly, but a good, true wife and mother. Clever as Mrs. Hepburn was in the art of deceiving, she could not have succeeded in fooling him if he had been oftener in her society, but his official duties as Judge of a large district necessitated frequent absence from Calcutta, and when he was at home he was too busy to give much time to his wife and babies, two boys under four years old. Two elder children, one a girl, were in England for their education. In a few years' time this girl would be coming out to India, and Mrs. Hepburn desired greatly that Marjorie should be married before she should arrive. When

the Judge remonstrated on the renewal of large parties and entertainments before the year of mourning for his brother was over, his wife told him that May needed variety, and that it was on her account she gave these parties, it being her duty to try and effect a good settlement in life for her. Judge Hepburn, in common with most men of his day, believed marriage to be the one proper goal of every young woman's hopes, and the legitimate end of her being; he therefore was also desirous that Marjorie should marry, and soon, for she was almost twenty years old, and her mother and aunt had each been married before she was sixteen. Remembering his brother's wishes concerning May, he said to his wife, 'You might accomplish that purpose, Cecilia, without taking the lassie into gay scenes, if you were to invite Major Hepburn more frequently in quiet, friendly fashion; he of all men is the one whom her father would have preferred she should marry, and for my part I see no objection; he is a rising man as well as a truly worthy one, and is sure to make his mark in the world.'

Mrs. Hepburn stooped to disentangle the meshes of her favourite netting-work, and half a minute passed before she said, in her most childish, gleeful accents—

'What a queer, delightful idea! That grave, proper Major Hepburn, and our bonnie May! Well, contrasts always look best, and it will save me trouble and anxiety in seeking nice men to come and visit us.'

The Judge went away under the impression that his wife approved his scheme, and that henceforth Stuart would be a frequent guest at 'The Aloes'; but this natural impression was false. Mrs. Hepburn hated Stuart—the word is not too strong; the peach-blossom faced, comfortably plump little woman, with baby-like blue eyes, and shining ringleted head, and graceful, kittenish movements, not looking her thirty years of age, was skilled in the art of disliking, as well as in that of deceiving; she hated Stuart because she instinctively felt that he divined her falseness and gave little credit to her pretty, glistening talk; also, because he was born poor and lowly, and yet had been made to bear the same name as her husband, and was known to society as his kinsman. She had as real and sincere an attachment for Marjorie, the daughter of her only sister, as she was capable of feeling for any one, and she allowed herself to believe that any responsive affection on May's part would be destroyed by marriage with the clear-sighted Stuart; therefore, all these things considered, she resolved that such a marriage should not take place. She had now a new and absorbing scheme on hand, and was accordingly a happy woman, for she thrived, mentally and physically, upon scheming and manoeuvring. She set about this scheme 'cannily'; gave no more large parties, refused several invitations, and asked Major Hepburn two or three times to dinner when there could be no opportunities for private conversation, hostesses not being supposed to leave their

drawing-rooms of an evening, although, from the immense size of the drawing-room at 'The Aloes,' Mrs. Hepburn could easily have left the young people in comparative solitude had she chosen to do so; on the contrary, she kept Marjorie very much at the harpsichord, whilst she herself played chess with Major Hepburn; but the Judge, who really, because of his high estimation of Stuart, desired this match for the girl whom he loved, as being both his brother's daughter and his wife's own niece, saw that opportunities for more intimate intercourse between Stuart and May were not given, and he said to his wife—

'Could you not ask Stuart to drop in occasionally to breakfast or to luncheon? When you are riding in the morning and meet him, just bring him home with you, then he might, if he cared, dawdle an hour or so with May whilst you are engaged with your tailors and ayahs, as you generally seem to be of a morning. Of course a *chaperon* ought to know how to manage to bring young people together, and at the same time attend properly to all the proprieties.'

'How clever you are, Farquhar! Ask him in of a morning! I should not have thought of that myself.'

'Would you not? Then it is strange that young men do come and lounge about these rooms. I suppose they come uninvited.'

The following morning Mrs. Hepburn, who was riding alone, Marjorie not being very well, met

Major Hepburn, also on horseback, as she did almost every day at that hour, and after they had ridden together for a short time, she said—

‘You have not been with us at dinner for a week; would you care to come in and breakfast with us this morning?’

‘Thank you, but I cannot. I thought you heard me telling Miss Hepburn that I must be on duty for a few days.’

‘Ah, yes, I had forgotten; but it is a pity, for the Judge goes away to-morrow to spend some weeks at one of those horrid outlying stations of his, and gentlemen seldom care to come to a house where there is no gentlemen to entertain them; besides, May and I generally take advantage of his absence to breakfast *en peignoir* in our own rooms, but if you care to come, and will let us know, of course we shall be glad to see you any time—if you care about coming, you know.’

Stuart might have replied that the young officers of his regiment and others could tell a different tale as to the secluded breakfasts eaten ‘*en peignoir*’ in the Judge’s absence from home, and he could have said that he would like greatly to be admitted into the intimate family life at ‘The Aloes’; but he had too much rightful pride to express an anxious desire to go to any house the mistress of which evidently cared so little to see him there; he felt himself snared, and yet could not speak out that feeling. He replied, a little stiffly and awkwardly—

‘I shall certainly come sometimes and pay my

respects to you and Miss Hepburn, if I shall not be intruding.'

'No, oh no; pray come to luncheon some day when you have time, and care to come.'

Incidentally that evening, Mrs. Hepburn said to Marjorie—

'Isn't it odd how men who are not marrying men, but are swallowed up in their professions, love to club together, and prefer each other's society to ours?'

'Do they? I had not thought about it.'

'I have noticed it; for example, I was riding with Major Hepburn this morning, and pressed him to come and take pity upon us whilst your uncle is away, and he evidently does not care to come—talked of paying his respects to us sometimes.'

'Are you sure that you made him understand that you wished him to come?'

'Really, dear, it is difficult to know whether a man not quite of one's own class does understand one's modes of speech; a man accustomed to the phraseology of good society would have been quite sure that I wished to see him, but evidently he does not care to come.'

'I cannot think that; I believe he did not understand you. If you had said straight out that you wished to see him he would be delighted to come; but did you do that?'

'My dear, if you are so anxious for his society, you can tell him so yourself.'



‘I shall not do that,’ Marjorie replied, with apparently unmoved quietness.

‘Why not? Such old friends as you are must feel just like brother and sister; indeed, Captain Hayes told me the other day that the Major speaks of you as of a dear younger sister.’

Marjorie held her beautiful head a little higher, and made no reply, though as soon as she was alone, she took herself to task for being vexed at hearing that the Major looked upon her as a sister. Why should he not do so? What could be more natural? Yet her aunt’s words stung her; if Stuart had himself addressed her as sister, she thought she would have been pleased; it was only the knowing that he spoke of her as such that annoyed her. Stuart did come to luncheon two or three times, and once saw Marjorie alone, after which interview he felt distressed at heart on her account, for he saw that she was out of spirits, and almost to be called unhappy. He knew well now that there was no other woman in the world whom he liked and admired so much; down in the depths of his heart he substituted loving for liking, but would not say out the word even for his own ears only, and yet it kept ringing in his heart, until, taking himself seriously to task, he held an inward consultation as to whether he had any right to ask her to share in his life’s purpose, and to be content never to be a wealthy, although always a greatly loved and tenderly indulged woman. Whilst he was in this state of uncertainty, and more restlessly

doubtful concerning his duty than he had ever yet been, he and Mr. Reynolds, who was now well enough to go a little into society, were formally invited by Mrs. Hepburn to attend a musical party at 'The Aloes,' and as the latter wished to accept the invitation, Stuart felt compelled to accompany him; and he went, half gladly, half fearingly, dreading he knew not what.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE party at 'The Aloes' was at first delightful. The guests were few, but choice, and people could circulate comfortably about the vast reception-rooms, rich in oriental splendour, and whilst sipping cooling drinks and iced wines, listen or not, as they liked, to the music which was exceedingly good for an amateur performance at that date. Part songs and old English madrigals were well rendered. Mrs. Hepburn sang a charming French chanson, accompanying herself on the guitar, and looking the while a picture of innocent loveliness; then Marjorie sang, unaccompanied, some of Burns' Scotch songs, which, it must be remembered, were then comparatively new everywhere, and almost unknown in India. 'To Mary in Heaven,' and 'Auld Lang Syne,' touched Stuart to the core of his heart, and roused many memories, some of which he began to recount to Marjorie in lowered tones. We, at this date, can scarcely realise what were the feelings of our fellow countrymen (especially of those who were dwellers in foreign lands) when they first heard the songs of Burns, and their hearts glowed and leapt within them at recognising

their very own sentiments and emotions, which had not in them "struggled outwards for words," so eloquently and so truthfully expressed. One can better imagine than describe (though perhaps one can scarcely even imagine) the effect upon a grown-up Scotchman, far away from home, who heard 'Auld Lang Syne' sung for the first time, and by Scottish lips that could properly render the tender pathos of the 'braid, auld Scottish tongue.'

Mrs. Hepburn noted the unusual, though repressed excitement of Stuart's tones and looks, and Marjorie's glowing cheeks and responsive glances, and she suddenly called upon Stuart to 'tell them all about Robert Burns.'

'He was only a ploughman, wasn't he, major, this gifted countryman of yours, ours, perhaps, I ought to say, seeing that I am a Scotchman's wife?'

'Yes, madam, at one time in his life he followed the plough, so I have heard and read, but he came of decent folk for all that.'

'Everybody does in Scotland, it seems to me; I don't know how it's contrived, but the humblest seem to be related, or say they are—"count kin," I think, is your phrase—with their betters, isn't it so?'

For Marjorie's sake, not for his own, Stuart felt himself colour; but, looking steadily into Mrs. Hepburn's eyes, he replied—

'I suppose, madam, they do not count kin unless they *are* kin?'

‘Oh, I suppose not; you are a truth-telling nation, amongst all your innumerable virtues, are you not? but then *how* is it that everybody is related to everybody?’

‘I do not know, madam, unless it may be that our country being very poor, our nobility and gentry were not able to provide fittingly for all their younger sons and daughters, who thus gradually became merged with what it pleases great folk to call the common herd.’

‘Aye, but to take with them into it, and hand down to their descendants much of the dignity, and refinement, and noble breeding which was their birthright,’ interposed, somewhat hotly, a Mr. Anstruther, another Scotchman who had been listening, with a little annoyance and more wonder, to Mrs. Hepburn’s talk.

Mrs. Hepburn laughed her prettiest, gayest laugh.

‘Here’s another Scot standing up for his country! I must say that you are devoted patriots, and even those of you who do rise in the world never learn to despise your poor relations, never become ashamed of them and their names, however common they may have been.’ Here, to every one’s amazement, Mrs. Hepburn stopped suddenly, and the colour rushed to her face. She always afterwards declared that she had not thought of Major Hepburn until she was in the act of saying these ‘unlucky words;’ be that as it may, her usual cleverness deserted her, for her sudden pause, heightened colour, and general embarrassment, drew the attention of every

one to her, and the amazed, awkward silence that followed was broken by Stuart's voice, a little lower pitched than usual, and marked more strongly than usual by the Hepburn catch of the breath, but saying slowly and distinctly—

‘Sometimes, Mrs. Hepburn, Scotchmen *do* alter their names, and yet are not ashamed of them. Mine is a case in point. My father's name was McDonald, but when my friend and benefactor, the late General Hepburn, rescued me from poverty and obscurity and wished me to bear his noble name, which was also that of his far-away kinsman, my honoured grandfather, I was happy in being able to comply with his request.’

Mrs. Hepburn recovered herself—gracefully, her many admirers thought.

‘Oh yes, dear major, we understand that perfectly. I was not thinking of you; how could I be, of you who saved my brother-in-law's life, to whom he owed much; but now, shall I give you another song, a Portuguese ballad, which Donna Maria gave me?’

Mrs. Hepburn began her song, and Stuart fell back from the group around her, to meet Marjorie's look of warm sympathy, and to hear her say eagerly—

‘Thank you, that was well done of you, dear friend!’

Before Stuart, whose heart thrilled with wild delight at her words, could answer her, her eager, glowing look changed to one of alarm, as she exclaimed—

‘Look ! look at Mr. Reynolds ! he has fainted.’

In an instant, Stuart was beside Mr. Reynolds’ easy-chair, the song came to an abrupt end, and all was confusion. Mrs. Hepburn fell into hysterics, and had to be conveyed into the outer drawing-room, whilst Marjorie and another lady made themselves useful in aiding Stuart to apply the proper remedies to Mr. Reynolds. A doctor was sent for, and as soon as the invalid recovered consciousness he was taken to his own house, where it was long before the alternate fits of faintness and wild excitement gave place to quiet and natural sleep, from which shortly after the dawn of day he awoke in a calmer spirit, to find the faithful and apparently unwearied Stuart still watching beside him. The medical men (for Mr. Vicars called in another surgeon) did not feel comfortable about Mr. Reynolds, nor indeed, as they honestly acknowledged, were they sure what was the matter with him ; the various forms of heart disease were less known and studied at that date than now.

After a few days Mr. Reynolds regained almost his former measure of health, but Stuart noticed that he was more constantly restless ; that he often began sentences and never finished them, and that he clung to him, Stuart, with even closer clinging than he had yet shown.

One evening, when Stuart had come in, after being on duty all day, Mr. Reynolds said—

‘Did you meet a gentleman leaving the house as you came in ?’

‘Yes; is he the friend from Madras, from whom you were expecting a visit?’

‘Just that, and do you know that he is a lawyer, and that he has been making my will for me?’

‘I am glad, sir, that you have been able to secure the services of an old friend in such an important matter.’

‘I suppose it is important, for there is a goodish bit of money to be disposed of; altogether, in one investment and another, not much less than two hundred thousand pounds sterling; it’s a tidy little sum that, isn’t it, eh?’

Stuart laughed.

‘It certainly is, sir, a very tidy little sum.’

‘Aye lad, it’s *that*, and what think you I am going to do with it?’ asked Mr. Reynolds; and then, before Stuart could reply, he added excitedly, catching the young man’s hand and grasping it as firmly as his weakness would allow, ‘I have left it all, every penny of it, to you, who have been so good to me—you, whom—I must say it out like some silly woman—whom I love; it will be all yours as soon as I’m gone, and who knows how soon that may be?’

Stuart did not feel the clasping hand, did not see the face of the speaker, did not hear his voice, and yet he felt, and saw, and heard with a force and vividness such as he had never before experienced; but these strange emotions only lasted long enough for Mr. Reynolds to wonder at his



silence, before his answer came in quiet, soothing tones.

‘This is very good, too good of you, my dear sir; I can never thank you enough for your kindness, but I cannot possibly accept it.’

‘Confound you, sir! What the deuce do you mean?’ shouted Mr. Reynolds. ‘You can’t accept my money! isn’t this a pretty way to treat me? May I not do what I choose with my own, I should like to know?’

‘Pray do not agitate yourself, sir; it grieves me to annoy you, but cannot you see that I have not the slightest claim to receive such an enormous gift at your hands?’

‘What the mischief do you know about your claims? I’m the best judge of them, I should think; I tell you I like you, took a fancy to you when I first saw you at Government House two years ago, and liked you better still when you saved me from those black devils of natives; if I choose to leave you my money I will, and if you don’t take it, it shall go to old Harry for me; nobody else shall have it.’

‘But is there no one else who ought to have it—some relations, people with real claims?’

‘Claims be hanged! Perhaps I could tell you of some of your own that you would not altogether like to hear of. Come, say you will do as I wish, and take the goods the gods send you.’

‘Let us talk over it quietly, my dear sir; I would willingly please you, if possible, and myself

too, for I am not quite such a fool as not to know the solid advantages of having two hundred thousand pounds.'

'Aye, advantages indeed! No more slaving at Fort William; no more weary jungle expeditions; no more tours to interpret the brutal jargons of those black devils; no more fighting, but living like a lord, in your precious Scotland, if you choose; I thought you would not be such a fool as to refuse such an escape from slavery to ease and grandeur.'

Stuart listened in consternation; the idea of being called upon to give up his profession had not dawned upon his imagination.

'My dear Mr. Reynolds, we must try and understand each other; I must know whether, if I accept your magnificent offer, I shall be wronging your own blood relations.'

'No, I tell you; no, there is no one nearer than yourself to whom I ought to leave the money. Why can't you believe me?'

'I must believe you, sir, if you assure me that you are acting justly.'

'I am acting justly! I never said anything truer than that; for, Stuart—Stuart—here, come nearer to me, boy, come listen; I cannot help it, I cannot keep it back any longer; I had always imagined that it might be so, but was not sure until the other evening, when that ridiculous idiot of a woman, with her confounded folly, made you declare your former name; come near, I say, and I will tell you.'

Mr. Reynolds actually writhed with nervous excitement, and the veins on his temples looked like knotted purple cords, whilst his words came in gasping sobs, scarcely intelligible.

Stuart, alarmed said peremptorily—

‘No, you shall not say one other word until you have taken some cordial and composed yourself.’

Mr. Reynolds had learnt by this time that Stuart would be obeyed whenever he chose to exact obedience, so he swallowed the cordial, pressed one hand upon his fluttering heart, and with the other tightly grasped Stuart’s long, firm, shapely fingers, and with brave efforts after quietness of tone and manner began to speak.

## CHAPTER V.

‘CANNOT you guess what I have to tell you?’ began Mr. Reynolds. ‘I also am a Scotchman, and I also have changed my name. People of our nation were in little favour anywhere thirty years ago, and a name with a “Mac” before it was particularly disadvantageous. I had nothing to make me wish to keep it. I received no answers to letters and inquiries about my wife, whom I had left not altogether in such a way as I should have done; forgive me that! I called myself Ronalds from motives of prudence; the French people in Ceylon where I first began trading called me Rénal, and by degrees that became Reynolds, which I thought so good that I have stuck to it. I have deceived you often, more shame to me, but I am telling the truth now; my real name is Ronald McDonald; I am your father, and you are my own son; now, can you refuse my money or doubt your claim to it; surely you will not turn from me now?’

Stuart could not speak, he was so sorely perplexed and amazed. Surely the invalid’s mind

was wandering, and there could be no word of truth in the tale that he had been telling. He had always believed his father to be dead, and although when he had thought of him at all the thoughts had not been those of deep love and esteem, he nevertheless had pictured him as a different being from the vulgar, irreligious, querulous-tempered man before him. The first thing was to question and be convinced as to the truth of this extraordinary statement, so, with full respectfulness of manner, he said:—

‘My dear sir, I would not indeed turn away from you, but this is a wonderful revelation which I cannot all at once take in; it has always been believed that my father died long ago.’

‘But I tell you he did not die, for I am he; my father-in-law, who was also my uncle, was never very kind to me, and perhaps did not trouble himself to make particular inquiries after me.’

‘You must not mistake me, sir,’ Stuart said gently; ‘but I own that I should like to have some proofs convincing to my own mind that you have not made some mistake—that you are not——’

‘Proofs!’ interrupted Mr. Reynolds; ‘what does the boy mean? Here, answer me a few questions, wasn’t your grandfather’s Christian name David? Hadn’t he been wounded at Sherriffmuir, and didn’t he limp a little from an accident in trying to save Lord Hepburn from a falling tree? Didn’t he keep a woollen-goods shop in the Tolbooth Wynd of Ennerleddie? Didn’t he live in an old handsome

house which had once been part of the old monks' dwellings? and wasn't it full of carved furniture made in Queen Bess's time, and in the reign of Charles the Second? Wasn't his daughter, your mother, married to her cousin Ronald in Port Henry in a bit housie in the seagate by Bishop Ross himself? Now, what do you say now? Stay, I'll tell you some small things that no fremd-folk could be acquaint wi'. Wasn't the big bed in the best sleeping-chamber carved in all the panels with stories out of King Solomon's life; the Queen of Sheba's visit, camels and all, and the judgment about the quarrelsome women's bairns? eh! don't you mind of the sprawling, naked wean held aloft, and the gruesome hangings which were needle-worked by Lady Marjorie's great-grandmother?'

Mr. Reynolds paused out of breath, and triumphantly took again Stuart's hand, which he had let fall a while before; he was feeling triumphant, for he knew that he had proved his case, and also because he had gathered, from the mere surprise (unmixed with any indignation or repulsion visible to him, evinced by Stuart, that he was in ignorance as to the worst of his sins against old David Hepburn; the fear of Stuart being aware of that had been the only hindrance to his having revealed his relationship weeks earlier. Mr. Reynolds never guessed what a struggle Stuart had gone through, and what emotion he had conquered, although if he had not been a selfish man he would have noticed the whiteness of his cheeks and lips, and the unshed tears

with which his eyes were full, as he said, in low but steady tones :—

‘I am quite convinced, sir; I believe that you must be my father.’

‘There’s a good fellow! I knew that you would listen to reason, for you always are reasonable; the old uncle made a better article of you than he did of me, and yet you’re not a canting humbug. I’ll tell you of whom you often remind me, of the only pious person I ever believed in; it’s something in your great height and the way you have of carrying your head, and the look in those eyes of yours when you wish to read folk’s thoughts; ye mind of him, too, I dare say,—Mr. Lindsay, the chapel minister.’

‘Mind of him! Of Mr. Lindsay! ’Deed, do I. The best man who ever lived!’ cried Stuart; and as he thought of that pure-souled being, elegant in person and exalted in mind, a horrible aversion to the poor creature beside him took sudden possession of him, and it required a strong remembrance of Mr. Lindsay’s lessons before he could crush it down and respond adequately to his father’s affectionate words and touches, strangely caressing for a man of his years to show to a man of Stuart’s age.

Stuart, noticing that Mr. Reynolds looked ill and wearied, insisted upon his talking no more, but getting settled for his night’s rest, and as he himself was to sleep at Tamarisk Lodge he could promise to be with him at an early hour the next morning. He was not sorry to have an opportunity for quiet

thought and to look his position fully in the face; being now convinced of Mr. Reynolds's relationship to him, he would not allow his mind to dwell on the memory of the many ways in which he had endeavoured to deceive him, and of the deliberate falsities he had told him, further than to offer a prayer that even yet in his old age he might see and strive to amend so terrible a sin. Stuart remembered now, with a thrill of comprehending thankfulness, with what earnest care his grandfather had instilled into his mind the law of truth; how particular he and Mr. Lindsay, and even old Tibbie had been in guarding his every word, and how severely the slightest deviation from exactness of speech had been reproved and punished. He understood why now, and his heart ached for the grief that his grandfather and his young mother must have felt for the nephew and husband in whom the principle of truth seemed utterly wanting. As yet (as Mr. Reynolds had rightly divined), Stuart imagined no stronger reason for the displeasure he knew his grandfather had entertained against his son-in-law, and was happy in that ignorance; but turning his mind from these thoughts he dwelt upon his own future prospects; he had no longer any hesitation as to accepting his father's wealth, for had he not the best right to it? He gave a sigh to the thought that he would not need to earn money for his hospital, that it would be forthcoming without further exertion on his part, but as to giving up his profession, that he would not do; he was at heart a soldier, and believed no life equal



to a soldier's life, still he thought that a time might come when it would be more advantageous to him to exchange into one of the British regiments, for there were many spiritual and moral drawbacks to life in India, especially for ladies; and with this latter consideration his musings merged themselves into one deep, absorbed thought of Marjorie, of whom he now, for the first time, allowed himself to think absorbingly, recalling with thrills of inexpressible joy her words, 'Thank you, dear friend,' which had never ceased to echo in his heart since the hour they had been spoken, and dwelling upon the hope of soon calling her his own, of loving and cherishing, and making her happy—for even this, the closest interest of his heart, was not alone a selfish interest, but was bound up with the desire of promoting the happiness of another; he longed to marry Marjorie, not so much that she might make him happy as that he might make her happy.

When morning came and he went to his father, he found him so much refreshed by sleep and food as to be quite eager for the conversation for which he also was desirous. He considered it his duty to mention at once both the hospital scheme and his affection for Marjorie, although the telling cost him much effort. With the latter information Mr. Reynolds was pleased, called the young lady a bonnie lassie (for he no longer avoided, but rather seemed bent upon using Scottish phraseology), and joked in a fashion which made Stuart wince; but at the former plan he laughed contemptuously,

until seeing by his son's face and manner how real and unalterable a purpose it was, he shifted his ground, and with manifest dread of grieving or offending him, which was at least touching, he tried to show satisfaction respecting that also, and Stuart, feeling that it would be wrong not to show answering gratitude, exerted himself to be so tenderly kind as to delight the poor old man, who, contrary to all former precedents, began to lead the conversation to Scotland, and finally to Ennerleddie and to Stuart's early life there. Stuart, with delicate consideration which was scarcely deserved, avoided the story of his mother's weary journey from Dundee, and the touching incident of the meeting between her and her father in the cathedral chapter-house; after merely mentioning the fact of her dying when he was only seven months' old, he went on with anecdotes of his childhood in the old 'Red House.' Something in the narration seemed to surprise the listener, who presently said, hesitatingly—

'Why, laddie, you seem to have been very poor. Wasn't my uncle fairly well-to-do for a country-town merchant?'

'I think he had been at one time; but before I was born he lost a good deal of money—all that he had, I believe—and was obliged to sell his business and employ himself as foreman to the man who bought it, and when that man, Mr. Dunlop, died, grandfather was too old to do hard work, and after Tibbie's death, and through his long illness, we had a sair time o't.'

Stuart went on to describe some incidents of the 'sair time' in the simplest possible language, merely detailing unadorned facts which kept coming up, one by one, out of his memory. His father listened in pain that was cruelly real, yet he felt a paralysed inability to stop the recital, every word of which was wringing his heart as it had never before been wrung. Now, for the first time, did he see the meanness and brutality of selfishness; in the light of his son's life of self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, he saw the darkness of his own long life of self-pleasing, and at last his mental agony caused him to groan aloud. Stuart stopped. 'Am I tiring you, sir; are you in pain?'

'No, no. It is only that I am ashamed of having neglected my poor wife and her old father; and when I hear of your noble conduct, and your care of the old man, I feel what a wicked, selfish wretch I have been.'

It only needed words such as these to awaken in Stuart's heart the filial feeling for being deficient in which he had been condemning himself. He hastened to speak kindly and soothingly, and Mr. Reynolds, scarcely capable of understanding that this upright man could not esteem him, began to think that there was something interesting in his own penitence. All his life he had enjoyed talking of himself, and putting himself in the high lights of those pictures that his redundant imagination and facile tongue were so fond of painting; and now, even though there was some genuine shame

in his heart, he yet found a melancholy satisfaction in dragging out to view, and in making every possible excuse for, the conduct which to a certain extent he did lament. Recalling to mind that he had written one curt, unkindly letter to his wife shortly after his desertion of her, and gathering from Stuart's account that that epistle had never been received, he multiplied it into several, none of which, he complained, had been answered; 'possibly,' as he sighingly said, 'they had never reached their destination.' Certainly the proverbial Scottish want of apprehension of a joke must have been peculiarly marked in him, or he could hardly have uttered these last words without at least a shadow of a smile. Stuart took them in good faith, and felt his heart so much lightened that it was something of a shock to find his father urging upon him absolute secrecy to all the world concerning the relationship between them. Although Stuart was reserved as to his inner feelings and deepest thoughts, he had no love of petty mysteries, and was as transparent as the daylight in all that concerned his outward life; so he regretted that the shadow of a mystery and the darkness of a secret should be thrown around him, but his father's desire was so urgent that it could not but be yielded to.

'I am sorry, sir, that this is your wish; I had thought of telling this great matter to Judge Hepburn, whom I have to see to-day upon business. My palanquin will be here almost immediately to

take me to "The Aloes" to keep my appointment.'

'No, no! You must not mention our relationship even to him. There is something too absurd in both of us having changed our names; people would imagine all sorts of things. But by all means tell the judge that I have made my will in your favour; that will strengthen your suit with him, if not with the fair lady herself.'

'Thank you; I think he will be glad to hear of my good fortune.'

'I am sure he will. And harkee, lad, see you win over that pretty little idiot, his wife. Always win fools, and let the wise folks take care of themselves.'

'Is she an idiot?' said Stuart. 'I am inclined to think otherwise.'

'She is a perfect baby, but a pretty one, and if you wish to win her, flatter her, though I fear that you will not condescend to do that.'

'I should not like to insult her,' replied Stuart, 'and in my opinion flattery is an insult. But I see my man coming through the hall, so the palanquin must be ready, and I will say good-bye until this evening, when I shall hope to see you again.'

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the official business which had taken Major Burn to Judge Hepburn's house was finished, ten gentlemen fell into conversation, and Stuart took occasion to inform the judge of the nature of Reynolds's will, and of the great wealth that in consequence he some day at his disposal. Hepburn, thinking of Marjorie, and also smiling at Stuart, gave his congratulations in warmer terms than he was wont to use even when pleased, for he was a slow-tongued, cold-blooded man. Stuart, moved by the unusualness, contrived to convey something of his joy and hopes concerning Marjorie, and Mr. Burn also managed, without any specific engagement or absolute promise, to show him that his suit, should he make it, would not be refused. 'I am especially glad of this good news,' said the judge, 'because I have heard this news of the unfortunate episode at my wife's

You know that ladies will not think before they speak—I suppose they really cannot; and,

after all, their chatter is our refreshment. I do not admire learned women : but of course you feel sure, as I do, that Mrs. Hepburn spoke thoughtlessly after the manner of her sex, and had no intention of paining you.'

'I am sorry that you should have heard of it; the sooner it is forgotten the better.'

'It was my niece who told me, and I assure you, appreciatingly, as regards your part in the transaction. It was no doubt honourable and generous of you to speak as you did, but you will pardon me for saying that it was unnecessary. By my advice, as you know, my late brother obtained King George's patent of permission for your change of name, so there can be no occasion for your ever alluding to the name of McRonald, to which you have no longer a legal right. Besides, under all circumstances, and considering your father's character and exploits, it might be more prudent not to refer to him so openly.'

Stuart flushed to the very brow, and replied, hastily—

'I know, sir, that my father acted selfishly and unkindly in leaving my mother dependent upon her aged father, and also that before his desertion of her he had been blamably extravagant, but I do not see why even such faults should make it advisable for me to shun all mention of his name.'

Mr. Hepburn looked in blank amazement, and said to himself that he had been more absurdly stupid than his wife. He absolutely coloured hotly,

and for once wished himself an adept at strategical talk. His 'Well, no, perhaps not,' was not reassuring, and Stuart, steadying himself by resting a hand somewhat heavily on the writing-table near which he was sitting, said—

'What did you really mean, judge? I see that there is something of which I am ignorant.'

'And very wrong it is that you should be ignorant,' burst out the judge, glad to be able to blame somebody. 'Your grandfather, or Mr. Lindsay, or my brother, or rather all of them put together, were wrong in not telling you the whole truth, though if I had known that you were unaware of the facts, I would have—well, I would have done a good many things before I would have made any allusion to them, I assure you.'

'Will you please tell them to me now?' said Stuart, with quietness that did not deceive the judge. He knew that 'as even Iceland has its Hecla,' so the heart of the coldest-mannered Scotchman has its volcano. His own heart grieved for Stuart, and yet, being middle-aged, undemonstrative, and Scotch, he gave no outward expression to that grief, but replied thoughtfully, as if weighing the matter—

'Do you think that there is any necessity for your learning them now, at this late date, when the poor man, your father, has probably been dead for years?'

Stuart winced, and set his firm, well-fitting lips close together to keep back the cry of pain, almost



of physical agony, that had nearly escaped them, before he could answer—

‘I think it is necessary. It is always better to know all that one has to bear.’

‘I agree with you—in due time. It is rather late in the day in this case, and after all there will be nothing for you to *bear*, seeing that a memory can hardly be a present pain; but lest you might imagine something worse even than the truth, I will tell you what really did happen—about thirty years or more ago—before you were born.’

Then the judge told the tale, quietly, without exaggeration or extenuation, and Stuart listened quietly; but as his lips whitened and his eyes dropped, his heart was on fire, and Mr. Hepburn’s keenest pity was awakened, although he felt some slight surprise at the depth and bitterness of the young man’s suffering. The tale did not take long in telling (only a few minutes, though Stuart thought that he had looked at a zig-zag crack in the inlaid marble floor—just where a black and white lozenge met beyond the matting whereon his feet rested—hours, long hours), and when it was finished he raised his head and said, holding out his hand mechanically—

‘Thank you for telling me. I will go now, if you please.’

Mr. Hepburn took the hand, and retaining it in his own, said—

‘Let me beg of you not to take this so sorely to heart. Remember how greatly we all esteem

and honour you, and that, after all, a man stands or falls by his own merits or demerits, not by those of his forefathers.'

'You are very kind, but you can scarcely mean that, you who are justly proud of your name and lineage. All your men have been brave and honourable, all your women spotless.'

'That may be true enough, but it would not win me much of the world's esteem if I happened, myself, to be a disreputable scoundrel; and you know that you also bear the name of Hepburn, and carry much of the Hepburn blood in your veins. You never had any opportunity of being injured by McDonald's bad example, and the poor man is dead, so pray put him and his misdeeds out of your mind.'

'Would it make a great difference then if he were still alive?'

'What is the use of talking of what is not? That is a womanish habit! If he were alive it might be awkward for you, though I don't suppose that there is now any one who knows of this old story save myself.'

'Did the general tell you of this?'

Judge Hepburn, though not a tender-natured man, was an observant one, and he saw that this question came from a sore, rankling thought, and he hastened to reply—

'No, he did not; he never named it to me. After his death, in turning over his papers, I found a letter from Mr. Lindsay to him, giving a full

account of everything connected with your history, and speaking most highly of you, let me tell you, young though you were at the time.'

Stuart bowed his head, and a look of relief passed for a moment into his eyes. 'And you don't think that any one else knows?'

'No one else, as far as I am aware, and I advise you to take care that no one does know, not even your wife, when you get her.'

A bitter, anguished look swept over Stuart's face.

'If I ever marry,' he replied, slowly, 'my wife shall not be ignorant of any facts of importance concerning me, or rather she should know them before I should allow her to promise herself to me.'

'Nay, that is carrying honour too far, even to punctiliousness; never trust women with secrets, that is my advice to you.'

'Thank you; if you please I will go now.' And Mr. Hepburn, seeing how greatly Stuart wished to be away, let him go.

Stuart did not go to Mr. Reynolds's house, but to his own quarters, one of the rooms in which was comparatively small, and in it—by dropping a curtain before the doorway opening into a larger apartment—he could obtain privacy, that rare luxury in Indian dwellings. Dismissing the servant, who as usual stood at the threshold of the room, Stuart bade him not disturb him until he should clap his hands, and then, having dropped the curtain, he sat down upon a low couch, and buried his head

in the comparative coolness of its silken cushions, to wrestle with this new, strange agony which had convulsed the world, and confused all life for him. His very faith in his God seemed shaken, for why, he asked himself, should he who loved honour and honesty better than life find that his own father had held honour and honesty as things of nought? Why should he who had never owed any man a penny which he could not pay, have a father who had actually been a thief of another man's goods? Was there any reward for the virtuous and God-fearing when such trials might come upon them? These questions passed through his mind; that they should have come there at all proved how terrible had been its upheaval, but they did not long remain; he had sought privacy in order to wrestle with his grief, not to indulge it; but firm as was his natural power of resolution, strong as was his common sense, he found that he must let sorrow have its way; must pass through its varied phases, from hot anger and burning shame to sick heart-sinking and soreness, almost as much physical as mental, and which shrank from the thought of his previous anger as the flesh shrinks from the touch of burning iron. He looked at his sorrow on all sides, and could find no loophole to admit light; not only was his sense of honour and self-respect outraged, but the prospects of his future life was once again altered. At first there was no doubt or touch of hesitation in his imperative decision that he could never accept a penny of his

father's wealth which had had its origin in money stolen from an aged, hard-working man—it was simply impossible; in his anguish of anger he cried aloud, 'Impossible!' But after a time another thought presented itself, which, though thrust out at its first entrance, would return again and again, probing more deeply each time it returned, until at last he was forced to listen to its suggestion, and to ask himself whether he ought not to take that great wealth and give it all in charity as restitution for the sin by which it had been acquired. Was this what would found his hospital? He turned with sick loathing from the thought;—the cherished purpose, the pure, sweet dream of his boyhood, the vision of his youth, the firm purpose which had shone like a pillar of light upon all his path, which a hundred self-sacrifices had each year made more dear and more holy! How could he debase and degrade it by carrying it out to completion with the wages of sin, the gains of iniquity? And might not this be the especial sacrifice which would make the offering perfectly holy unto the Lord, by stamping it with the symbol of suffering, without some touch of which no offering can be altogether holy, seeing that the world's Redemption was won by suffering and sorrow? The sun had set, and the night had come softly, speedily, as night comes in those Eastern lands, and no one disturbed him, for Indian servants are slavishly obedient; and presently, the great, red-gold moon sailed up into the heights of her blue vaulted halls, and flooded

the bended head and the clasped hands of the young man who was wrestling, even as Jacob wrestled, but who, unlike Jacob, could see no angel, and yet was there not one there, nay, were there not many? Upon each moonbeam travelled a messenger, a ministering spirit from Him who giveth His angels charge over His people to keep them in all their ways.

The only sure answer that presented itself to Stuart was that it was his duty to give his father the chance of making himself what poor restitution now lay in his power; upon that answer he determined to act, although he felt that he could not do so immediately. Crushed and wearied in mind and body, he felt that he could not encounter his father that night, and having none of the morbid asceticism which loves to offer unnecessary sacrifices, he did not attempt to argue himself into going, though remembering the half promise he had made to Mr. Reynolds of being at Tamarisk Lodge again that evening, he wrote a brief note of apology for his non-appearance, and sent it by his own personal attendant, charging him to make all kind inquiries concerning the invalid, and to offer to remain with him all night should his services be desired. Then, to use the expressive language of Holy Scripture, Stuart 'washed his face and ate bread,' and after having attended to some necessary military duties, finding that he could not sleep, he determined to occupy himself in looking over a desk, the papers in which Mr. Reynolds had begged him to inspect

and arrange, and which had arrived at his quarters that afternoon. He found it, as his father had said, full of uninteresting business letters and bills, which he arranged with his own careful neatness; but when the task was nearly completed, about ten minutes before the bugle-call would sound for morning parade, he found in a secret recess carefully folded in small compass, and probably long forgotten, a paper which was not uninteresting, and which he felt might prove the answer to all his doubts—a paper that would give a new aspect to the decision hanging in the balance, and possibly a new colouring to his whole future life. During the first part of the time occupied in arranging the desk, there had come to him plainly and with strength not to be resisted, the conviction that however painful it would be to receive his father's wealth, yet, that both as his son and as David Hepburn's grandson, it was to him restitution should be made, and that it was his duty to take it up as a burden greater than wealth generally is even to thoughtful persons anxious to spend it conscientiously. With this conviction had come also the happier thought that the money needed for the building and endowment of the hospital might still be obtained by his own personal self-denial, and by profitable investment of his own actual earnings. Marjorie, if only she would have him when she knew all, should luxuriate in his great wealth, though he himself should still toil and strive in order to fulfil his vow. Whilst uncertain whether this happier reflection

were just and tenable, came the discovery of the paper, and therewith all seemed clear to him. Memory, by one swift flash of her magic wand, took him back to the day when the apples he had selfishly bought had seemed 'as lead in his hand'; and when, as he fully believed, unmistakable help and guidance had come to him; now, when the thought of inheriting his father's ill-gotten wealth lay as lead upon his heart, once again the needed help came, once more the burden would be lifted from his shoulders by the unmistakable interposition of Providence; once more he would be guided by circumstances, as by the very finger of God, into the right path.



## CHAPTER VII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the discovery which Major Hepburn had made, he attended parade with his usual quietness of demeanour and scrupulous attention to every detail of duty; there were some young men who loved and honoured him, who noticed that he looked pale and worn, and one or two went away declaring to each other that actually his hair was grayer than it had been yesterday; and this was so, although Stuart did not know it. That wrestling under the moonbeams had silvered them for evermore. Other men, than Jacob, have found that it is not possible to 'wrestle with God,' and to 'prevail,' without bearing to the end of life a mark of that wrestling and that prevailing.

Military business kept Stuart from visiting his father until late in the afternoon, and when he went to him he found that a change had come over his mind and manner. During his solitude, his thoughts had been occupied by Stuart's account of the troubles and hardships of his early life, and a kind of repentance, late and long delayed, for the sin which had brought those troubles upon his innocent son awoke within him, and in what was,

as far as it went, genuine distress, he almost resolved to be utterly truthful, and acknowledge to Stuart everything concerning his past life; but ere the resolution could be fully formed he shrank from it in sick horror; he could not, he felt, face the look of that grave and most noble countenance, which was but the index of a righteous and honourable soul. So far had his repentance gone, that he felt ashamed to face his son; it had not yet gone far enough to make him feel ashamed at being in the presence of his FATHER. There was real pathos in the considerate and delicate manner in which, after all ordinary talk had, by a kind of magnetism of feeling between the two men, fallen to the ground,—

Stuart said—

‘My dear sir, you desired me to read and examine all the papers in that desk which you sent to me.’

‘Certainly I did. Have you been kind enough to take that trouble for me?’

‘Yes, and your plain request must be my warrant and excuse for having read this letter, to which I wish to draw your particular attention.’

Mr. Reynolds’s eyes grew full of abject alarm, and Stuart hastened to explain that the letter was one written in French, and dated ten or twelve years back, from a lady who signed herself Julie Reynolds, and who addressed Mr. Reynolds as her husband, mentioning two children whom she spoke of as being his and hers.

This time Stuart had in his thoughts partly

wronged his father, which fact his father was no slow to perceive.

‘What!’ he exclaimed, ‘so you have been thinking that I have, a second time, brutally deserted a wife. No, no; I am not quite as bad as that; that poor lady—her names were Julie Lacoste—was a good wife to me, but she died seven years ago. I can show you indisputable proofs of her death; you shall examine them, and so convince yourself. Those two children and another born later, a little girl, are well enough off, and live in Ceylon with their mother’s brother, son of my first partner, and afterwards himself my partner.’

‘But have you not seen them all these years that you have been in Hindoostan? In this letter the lady complains of not having seen you for some time—’

‘I dare say. I was much occupied in money-making. Twelve years ago, did you say? Ah! I remember now, just about that time I went to Ceylon, and Julie and I lived together for nearly a year. After my return to Madras I had a letter telling me of the birth of our third and last child, a girl, whom, by the way, I called Clementina, after your mother, though nobody knew that, and poor Julie always would make it into Clemence. I was with my wife when she died, and when I left Ceylon I settled plenty of money on all three bairns; the eldest, Louis, is in partnership with his uncle, disagreeable, quarrelsome beggar, who made things very unpleasant for me, and I am glad enough that I have nothing more to do with him.’

‘When did you marry this Mademoiselle Lacoste, may I ask?’

‘When? let me see! Just twenty years ago. I did not know whether your mother was dead or alive, so it was a dirty bit of business; and though I have learnt from your account that poor Clementina did die long before, yet I am not at all sure whether the thing was really legal, for we were married by a Roman Catholic priest, and I never was a Romanist.’

‘Perfectly legal, of course, sir, when you fully intended it for a marriage; there ought not to be a question about that in your mind.’

‘No, you are quite right, there ought not to be; there is not, in fact.’

‘Well, my dear sir,’ said Stuart, hesitatingly, for the thing was not a pleasant one to say, ‘you must forgive me when I tell you that I think you ought to make those children your heirs, instead of carrying out your kind intentions towards me.’

‘But I do not think so; you are at any rate my eldest son; law and gospel alike entitles you to the lion’s share of my possessions, and they, as younger children, are fairly well provided for; I gave Louis six thousand pounds down to enter into merchandise with, and there’s four thousand, with the interest accumulating, for each of the others; then the girl has her mother’s jewels—no bad pickings those—besides a superb emerald and pearl necklace of my giving, a little fortune in itself; it’s worth at least two thousand pounds, though I luckily hit upon it for much less. Those children are all right,

and I tell you I would not leave all my money into such a family; they're a nasty mean lot, the whole crew of them; the only one worth anything was Julie, and she, poor lass, took after her mother, as good a woman as ever I saw, though a bigoted papist. No, I'm going to leave my money to one who will do credit to it, not to a nasty lot like that.'

'But, sir,' said Stuart, 'excuse me if I seem to dictate to you, which it is not my place to do; but I cannot think that the sums you have named are enough to give to your children out of two hundred thousand pounds, gained chiefly in partnership with their grandfather and uncle, and Mrs. Reynolds brought you money, did she not?—she alludes to it in that letter.'

'Yes, certainly; she brought me fifteen thousand pounds; and indeed, to be open with you, I am not easy in my mind about all my dealings with the younger Lacoste; he is a mean creature, and yet I did not always take fair advantage of him; to be sure he was precious easily gulled.' Here a smile broke over Mr. Reynolds's face, and so versatile and volatile was his nature that he was actually launching into a 'good story' of a transaction which, if not absolute swindling, had not been unlike ~~it~~ when he was arrested by his son's grieved look, ~~which~~ which the old man, with his newly-awakened conscience, read volumes of reproof. He stopped, and with lowered eyes said: 'I see you don't approve of that sort of thing, and maybe it was stretching the privileges of trade too far.'

‘If you see that now, sir, will it not be a comfort to you to restore to M. Lacoste that which—those moneys which you seem to think belong—are rightly his share?’

Stuart, whose wont it was to speak with somewhat of precision, had seldom so stumbled over a sentence, and his face was dyed crimson to the very brow; his father stared at him as if fascinated, understanding now what an honourable man thought of dishonesty and double dealing. In the sudden impulse of pain and shame he cried out:

‘But it has all been one wrong-doing from first to last, and some can never be atoned for; I didn’t mean to tell you, I knew you would be shocked, but I can’t hide anything from you. I have never been worthy, it’s all been crooked dealing; I can never tell you the worst.’

In his bodily weakness and excitement Mr. Reynolds’s voice died away into womanish sobs, and Stuart, alarmed, exclaimed,

‘Never mind telling me, sir; do not distress yourself by talking of the past. I know it all.’

These last words had an electrifying effect. Mr. Reynolds started up—

‘You know it all? What? tell me what!’

Stuart kneeling on one knee beside the couch, with eyes averted answered:

‘That which you could not bear to tell me—of our conduct to my grandfather; but surely it is repented of, is it not, dear sir?’

‘I don’t know; I don’t know what you would

consider repentance. I never allowed myself to think about it till lately. I'll tell you how it all happened. I was hard up, and I fell in with a fellow who offered me a way to riches if I could bring in a certain sum to start with, a little more than was in the Edinburgh Bank in my uncle's name; and he had commissioned me to draw some money for him, and so I didn't stop to think of the wrong to him. I don't believe I could have helped it; I never could be quite straight in all ways, even when I was a child, and I never could tell the truth. I've tried when it was for my interest to speak it, and yet I never could quite manage it. Other people always detected something false in it, and now it's too late to mend, so God help me!'

It can be imagined with what feelings Stuart listened to this rambling statement, which had come in fragments at the end of gasping breaths. He was inexpressibly shocked, but there was more of sorrowful compassion than even of righteous anger in his mind. Forgetful of his own sore feelings, he tried to give comfort and advice.

'You can yet do something to show your sorrow for the past; you can make reparation to M. Lacoste at any rate, by leaving him a fair share of your wealth.'

Mr. Reynolds looked at him.

'Ah! I see how it is, *you* would rather not have the money which you think was scraped together with unclean hands, which owed its origin in part to the wrong done to your grandfather.'

Stuart was silent from surprise; *how* could this man make speeches about himself? Was there indeed nothing real about him? Rather than not be the prominent object of his own and every one else's thoughts he would speak sentimentally even of his crimes, and it was difficult for one so simple and sincere as Stuart not to loathe this tortuously-winding, deceiving, and deceived soul. There were moments, however, when even this practised mummer could not keep the mask before his face, when the remnant of reality still left within him had to come forth to light. Such a moment came now. Alarmed by his son's silence, he exclaimed in tones of genuine dread and pain:

'Tell me, would you indeed hate to take my wealth because you know how it was gotten?'

How could Stuart answer other than the truth? but compassion and filial respect made him soften that truth as far as possible. Taking Mr. Reynolds's feeble, trembling hand in his own strong, firm grasp, he said, in tones as exquisitely gentle as they were sad:

'You are right, dear father; I loved my grandfather. I remember his toils and his sufferings, and it *would* pain me to have wealth that in part was gained by the act which caused and necessitated those sufferings.'

Before he had finished speaking, the strong-framed, healthy young man was trembling as much as was his aged father, who, after gazing blankly at him for a moment, turned his face to the wall.



‘Oh! I am punished indeed.’

And he wept aloud. What he had said in maudlin sentiment, not believing it in the least, of Stuart not wishing to have his money, he found to be actual fact, and truly might he say that he was punished, twice over, as it were; the vengeance had been long in coming, but it had descended swiftly, surely, at the last; and it may almost be said that the present pain was equal to the heinousness of the past sin. His son, the only person besides himself whom he had ever really loved; his lovable, noble-hearted, upright son, had called him *father* for the first time, but even whilst so calling him, had confessed that it would pain him to take up a son’s natural inheritance, and receive wealth from his hands. Yet, keen and bitter as this side of the punishment was, it was as nothing compared to the pain of having the veil of self-deception torn from his heart, of being compelled to drop the mask which he had worn so long that he had forgotten that it was a mask, and not his very own face.

In that terrible hour of self-revelation, he despairing of pardon; like Judas of old, he was a hopeless man, and would have done as Judas did had he had the power. Physical weakness came as relief to the mental agony; and Stuart, after administering a soothing draught, insisted upon some hours of absolute quiet, and it was not until the early hours of the following morning that the conversation was renewed.

No other word was said by Mr. Reynolds as to Stuart's acceptance of his fortune; for once in his life he acted unselfishly, and designedly forbore to wring his son's heart by entreaties, which he rightly guessed that son would think it unlawful to resist; he determined not to force him to accept what would always be a source of pain; but he honoured him by asking his aid in drawing out the plan of a codicil which would alter the provisions of his will, and constitute his three younger children and their uncle the heirs of the bulk of his fortune. Stuart begged to be appointed one of the executors, and his offer was gratefully accepted, as was also the promise of looking after the interests of the little Clementina, and ensuring that she should be sent to England or France for her education.

These points settled, Mr. Reynolds looked wistfully at Stuart, and said—

‘But this is no restitution of what—what I took, nay, stole from my uncle; you are his natural heir, and to repay you would be simple justice; but as it would pain you to receive anything from me for your own personal advantage, may I be allowed to bequeath money for that charitable scheme you told me of, that orphan asylum, or whatever it may be, at Ennerleddie?’

Stuart's wrestling three nights before had prepared him not only to endure this proposition, but to welcome it with the reply—

‘Thank you; it seems to me that that would be

the best possible way of repaying the old debt, if you really wish it.'

'I do, indeed; is there not something about paying back fourfold somewhere in the Bible? I have not opened one for a long time.'

Mr. Reynolds again grew agitated in his nervous eagerness; and, as usual, Stuart soothed him by his own quietness.

'Yes, father, just that, fourfold retribution, and is it that which you wish to offer?'

'Yes, I do—I do; it will be a weight off my mind; eighteen hundred pounds, that was the sum, a paltry mite to sell one's soul for? What a fool I was! Well, let me see, I have been thinking of ten thousand pounds, counting interest and all. Will you accept that sum, and invest it for your charity?'

'Willingly and thankfully, and I believe it will meet with the only acceptance that is worth having,' replied Stuart, with beautiful earnestness, and no less beautiful shyness which impressed his father as much as did the earnestness.

After a pause he said—

'And will you allow yourself to consider that sum, which is rightfully yours as your grandfather's natural heir, as your own gift to that charity, and thus lessen your own toiling and scraping and saving for it?'

'Thank you, father, I will do that,' Stuart replied, glad at heart to find that the acceptance cost him no such great effort, as he had previously imagined it

would do; but he could not help adding diffidently—

‘May I hope that you do *not* do this only for my sake?’

‘No, truly it is not for your sake only; I see now how much I have done that I ought not to have done, and how much I have left undone that I might have done. Tell me, are there not words like those somewhere? They have been haunting me lately. Are they also in the Bible?’

‘No, sir, they are in the Book of Common Prayer of our Church, and form part of the general Confession of the morning and evening services.’

‘Ay, ay; I mind now. I think I see it all again; the gatherings in the hollow of the hill-side, when I played with our old collie’s ears behind backs, or kept the wee lassie, your poor mother, from falling asleep, whilst Mr. Lindsay led the worship; and afterwards, our first meetings in a bit roomie up a windin’ stair in a dark close, where the old folk thought themselves gey an’ happy in being under the shelter of a roof to say their prayers together. I mind of it all now as if it were yesterday, though I’m real sure I havena’ thought on it for years. Ay, those were the words—left undone what we ought to have done, and done what we ought not to have done. Eh, me! it’s a terrible sair burden for your poor father, my man.’

Stuart grasped the hand that was seeking his.

‘But, dear sir, do you not also remember the promises of mercy that follow those words, and through whom they come?’

‘Promises!’ exclaimed Mr. Reynolds. ‘How can I look for Him to keep His promises to me when I’ve not kept any of mine to Him? There were those of my baptism and confirmation. I have broken them all; those to my uncle, to my wife, to your Mr. Lindsay, who warned me many a time—don’t talk to me of promises!’

‘But I must talk to you of these, sir; they will comfort you.’

Stuart did not find it easy to comfort his father; the long-delayed repentance, now that it had come, was bitter indeed, and was not made less bitter by the bodily weakness which daily increased; but after earnest persuasion, he induced him to let him seek and solicit for him the services of one of the chaplains provided by ‘the company’ for its English ‘servants.’ Few, indeed, were there of these chaplains, and for the most part they were not satisfactory persons, being generally more intent upon making money in speculations of their own than upon attending to the duties of their office; thus they were seldom at hand when needed, they were frequently wandering about upon commercial enterprises. However, at this juncture a chaplain was in Calcutta, and although Stuart knew him to be a different man from Mr. Lindsay, he yet, because of his office, consulted him with humility and by his respectful behaviour towards him influenced Mr. Reynolds to accept his visits and endeavour to benefit by them. One great and important thing the chaplain (though no skilled spiritu

adviser) could do ; he could spread the holy feast, which, for the first and last time, the two men, so closely connected by nature, yet so many years ignorant of the very existence of each other, shared together, a solemn hour not to be forgotten, and one that went far to relieve the pain and grief which had been crowded into the past few weeks of Stuart's life.

The reality of Mr. Reynolds's contrition was shown by the promptitude with which he carried out to completion arrangements for the disposal of his wealth in accordance with the plans agreed upon between him and Stuart, and indeed Major Hepburn had reason to believe that the sealed note entrusted to his care to be forwarded after Mr. Reynolds's death to M. Lacoste (a note, the writing of which cost much physical suffering) contained an acknowledgment of past crookedness of dealing in business matters, and a request for pardon. One bright and wholly pleasant incident Stuart ever had to look back upon in after years : one evening, when rendering some personal service to his father, he felt something being pushed upon his finger, and looking down, saw upon it, the handsomest ring that he had seen even in that land of magnificent jewellery ; one superb, oval-shaped sapphire of wondrous richness and depth of colour, encircled by diamonds of great size and brilliancy. Major Hepburn looked his admiration, and his father said :—

‘Ay, it is a beautiful ring, and you must accept

it from me, for it is associated with one of the few good actions of my life. Once, about twenty years since, in a voyage from Ceylon to this country, I was fortunate enough to save from drowning, the daughter of a wealthy French merchant; he was full of gratitude for what I had done, and insisted upon my acceptance of this really valuable ring; so,' added Mr. Reynolds, with a little sad smile, 'you may take it with a clear conscience.'

'And with great gladness, dear father,' heartily replied Stuart. It need hardly be said that it became a great treasure, and that it rarely left his finger; it did not for the few remaining days of his father's life, and Mr. Reynolds's trembling fingers pressed upon it, when supported in his faithful son's strong arms, he passed, with much bodily pain and deep sorrow of heart, from out this 'dying life,' to enter upon the endless life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

JUDGE HEPBURN congratulated himself that he had made no mention to his wife of the information he had received from Stuart of his being named heir to Mr. Reynolds's fortune, when, immediately after the funeral, Stuart called to tell him of the alteration in the will; he explained simply that he had discovered that Mr. Reynolds had near family ties, and that he had, in consequence, persuaded him to leave his money in the lawful channels.

'Three children of his own, you say, and two of them sons! What a disreputable old scoundrel! I never could endure that man; anybody could see he was given to drawing the long bow; indeed, I've heard people say on hearing an unlikely tale, "Oh, that's a Reynoldsite"; I never could imagine how you could put up with him, for you couldn't possibly have liked him.'

Stuart winced a little. 'It pleased him to like me, and he was kind also.'

'So he ought to have been; I am sure that you were kind and attentive to him, and deserved something at his hands, although of course you could not do otherwise than make him render justice to



his own children. May I take the liberty of asking whether he has left you anything ?’

‘Yes, this personal token of affection,’ and Stuart held out the sapphire ring. ‘Also a bequest of ten thousand pounds to a charity which it is hoped will some day be set on foot in Scotland.’

‘Oh ! but that is scarcely to yourself ?’

‘Not in one sense, certainly, but in another it is, for he especially wished me to deduct this sum from my own savings for that object I speak of, therefore it will help me, and smooth my way to trying my fortune with the lady I hope to win.’

‘Then I am truly glad to hear of it, and congratulate you ; of course I am disappointed on your account that you could not honestly succeed to the old man’s wealth, but I am more glad, if you will allow me to say so, that I can keep unshadowed the high esteem which I have always felt for you.’

That evening, the judge, when conversing with his wife, told her that he had had a visit from Stuart in the morning.

‘Well, did he tell you anything about that old man’s will ? I hope that he has been left a good round sum.’

‘Mr. Reynolds has left him a handsome ring, the finest sapphire I think I have ever seen, and also ten thousand pounds to be invested for some charitable scheme or other in which the major interests himself, some asylum or school, somewhere or other in Scotland : and the major gave me to understand that this bequest is to a certain extent a personal

gift, for he will deduct that amount from the sum which he thinks necessary for the accomplishment of this great scheme ; also, I am sure he wished me to perceive that this will render him all the sooner at liberty to propose directly for Marjorie.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Mrs. Hepburn, 'now I feel that I quite comprehend the dear major! he is a man with a scheme. So, he is going to found a charity! I *quite* see now why he is so indifferent to ladies' society, and to all our little wiles. I really believe, Farquhar, that even if he do propose to May, it will be for the sake of doing honour to the memory of the General, who really was always throwing her at his head.'

'Those ideas of yours, my dear Cecilia, are not very creditable, either to the dear major, as you call him, or to my brother; and now let me impress upon you two points, first, that you must please not to mention what I have told you concerning Major Hepburn's charitable scheme to any one, neither to May, nor any person; and secondly, that I wish you not to meddle in any shape between Stuart and Marjorie; they are old enough to manage their own affairs for themselves, and I will not have them interfered with in any way. Allow them every fair opportunity of meeting, and of knowing their own minds, and that is all that you are to do in the matter.'

'Then you still wish for this match?'

'I don't know what you mean, Cecilia; I don't *wish* to make any man marry my niece unless he

desires to do so himself; but Stuart made me clearly understand that he *does* wish to propose for May whenever he shall, in his honest, upright way of judging all things, feel himself at perfect liberty to do so.'

'What!' interrupted Mrs. Hepburn, 'you would keep her hanging on unmarried, waiting for when it may be that man's pleasure to propose!'

'Nothing of the sort. I simply don't interfere at all; if she finds any other man to propose to her before Stuart can do so, and she likes him well enough to take him, there remains nothing more to be said. I will not have you do anything one way or the other, beyond providing for their proper meeting of each other; and now I wish to know if you have any objection to receive Mr. Ericson into our house for a few weeks until he can provide quarters for himself; he will probably arrive this evening, for the vessel is signalled as being in the harbour.'

'Is that the young man who is to practise in our Law Courts?'

'Yes; and it is creditable to one of his expectations to come out here. He means work, there is no doubt about that; and if he have proportionate ability, will earn distinction.'

'What are his expectations?'

'His father, Sir Peter Ericson—he is only the first baronet, and they are somewhat "parvenus"—is exceedingly wealthy, and the eldest son is a poor sickly creature, and deformed, I believe; so this

young fellow, Ralph, the next in age, has a fair chance of the baronetcy and all the money.'

'He will be quite an acquisition! Why, Farquhar, you must mean him for Marjorie!'

'Really, Cecilia, you are too absurd. The idle romances which you women are so fond of reading make you quite coarse-minded on these points of love and marriage. I wish to have the young man here for a few weeks for business reasons, and I shall be glad if you will give your servants orders to see to his comfort.'

Mrs. Hepburn, judging her husband by herself, did not believe a word of his answer to her remark, but determined in her own mind that he was secretly planning how to make an end of Stuart's pretensions by bringing forward a rival in all respects eligible; she could help this excellent scheme—it was Farquhar's scheme—and she *would* also. An opportunity for beginning her congenial work presented itself that evening. Besides Mr. Ericson, there was but one guest, a Mr. Anstruther, at dinner; and when, after dinner, the judge carried off the stranger for a conference in his own room, and Marjorie was busily engaged at the harpsichord, Mrs. Hepburn talked to Mr. Anstruther, who held a high position in the Viceregal Court, and was also a trusted friend, as well as a faithful official, of the Governor-General. In the course of their talk together, Mrs. Hepburn chanced (as she would have phrased it) to mention Major Hepburn, and Mr. Anstruther took up the subject warmly, launching

into commendations of Stuart, and predicting for him a brilliant future.

‘I wish,’ he said, ‘he could be in command at B——; if he were governor of the place and district, his calm good sense, and his knowledge of the abominable jargon of a dialect spoken there, would be invaluable.’

‘Then, why is he not sent there?’

‘I really don’t know; he may be considered more necessary here; but no one has been appointed as yet.’

‘How nice it would be if Major Hepburn could get it!’

‘Are you anxious to get rid of him out of Calcutta, that you would send him so far away?’ laughed Mr. Anstruther.

‘No, you naughty man! Of course I don’t wish to get rid of him; but I take a great interest, the greatest possible interest in him, and that would be a capital appointment; such high pay!’

‘I should not think he would care so much for the pay as for the honour and credit of the thing.’

‘*Of course not*—not for the money itself; but I’ll tell you a great secret—you must never betray me. The dear man has a wonderful scheme in his mind of founding some great charitable institution, something like the old monks used to get up in Scotland; he is always saving money for that; it is, what the poet so sweetly says, “His waking thought, and his nightly dream,” and I feel so interested in it; that’s why I should like him to have that appointment.’

‘Your motive does you honour, dear madam ; well, really, this *is* interesting. In Scotland, you say ? Of course, some great college or museum in Edinburgh ; it is a most inspiring thought ; but we Scotchmen always are patriotic.’

Mrs. Hepburn knew that Mr. Anstruther prided himself upon his love of country, which love had not as yet manifested itself in any substantial form ; also that he prided himself (as if he had had anything to do with obtaining it) upon the superiority of education in Scotland, and she had played upon both these feelings ; knowing also that he had a more genuine passion than either—the love of learning and holding safely a secret, she hastened to say—

~ ‘My dear sir ! you must please not say a word about this to any one ; Farquhar would never forgive me for having betrayed the secret ; but I ventured to tell you, you are so entirely to be trusted ; and it *would* be delightful if, through you, poor little I could help on the founding of that great college in your bonnie Edinburgh ; would it not now ? ’

And Mrs. Hepburn clasped her hands, looking up with her beseeching, child-like air, fooling the ‘long-headed’ Aberdonian completely. His smile and gesture convinced her that she had gained her point, although his words were—

‘But, dear madam, what can I do to help the bringing about of such a desirable end ? ’

‘Fie ! fie ! as if all the world doesn’t know that you are all-powerful with the governor ! One word from you will settle it all, and you and I will have

such a delightful secret together! You will help me, won't you?'

'You overrate my influence, dear lady; but I will bear your honourable wish in mind, and if any poor endeavour of mine can further it, it shall be made.'

During the two following months, Stuart made many attempts to see Marjorie alone, and was never able to do so, so well did Mrs. Hepburn manage any plotting with which she concerned herself. Even when he did meet her, in the presence of other people, he felt a shade of coldness in her manner, and though he assured himself that he was only giving way to a groundless fancy, his feeling was the genuine instinct of love's own implanting; her aunt's constantly-dropped hints as to Stuart's indifference to everything but getting on in his profession, and especially his indifference to all women, had their effect; and dread lest she might show too much liking for an old friend, and have the nature of that liking mistaken by bystanders, made her show less cordiality than she bestowed upon ordinary acquaintances, considerably less than she showed Mr. Ericson, who, now being completely domesticated at 'The Aloes,' could not but be treated as a member of the family circle.

One afternoon Mrs. Hepburn, driving alone on the racecourse, and seeing Major Hepburn upon horseback, sought his eye, and on catching it brought him by a gesture to the side of the carriage. She stretched out her hand cordially, saying:

‘Do take pity on my loneliness and drive with me for a turn or two of the course.’

Thus invited Major Hepburn could not do other than give his horse to the ‘*syces*’ in attendance, and comply with the lady’s request.

‘Where is Miss Hepburn, that you are alone this evening?’

Now Marjorie had a severe headache, but Mrs. Hepburn, remembering that before coming out she had seen Mr. Ericson enter the large drawing-room where May was resting for the sake of its coolness, with a portfolio of sketches under his arm, she ignored the headache, and answered smilingly:

‘I hadn’t the heart to make her come out, for she and Mr. Ericson had got together over their sketch-books, and were enjoying comparing notes. You know they are both so fond of art.’

‘Yes,’ replied Stuart rather shortly.

Mrs. Hepburn enjoyed the tone; it steeled her heart and nerved her arm for the attack she was planning against the defenceless man, who felt uneasy, though he could scarcely have told why.

‘Is not Mr. Ericson a charming, pleasant man?’ inquired Mrs. Hepburn. ‘Every one must like him.’

‘I do not particularly,’ said Stuart, with an abruptness not natural to him, and which almost bordered upon rudeness.

Mrs. Hepburn raised her eyebrows and gave a little laugh.

‘Then you are an exception to the general rule;



'every one has something to say in his praise. Indeed I am almost tired of hearing the judge and May run on about him. Every day they discover some new virtue or charm in him, and come to me and rave about it. I never before saw our May so taken up with any one; he knows every one worth knowing in London, and can talk to her about her old acquaintances there and in Bath, and the theatres and the picture galleries; it is delightful to hear them talking together.'

'I have no doubt it is,' said Stuart, without the shadow of a sneer, but over the rugged, grave face came a look so patiently humble that it would have touched the coldest-hearted woman; but when a woman has no heart she cannot be touched at all: thus the prettiest possible smile sparkled out on Mrs. Hepburn's face, bringing the delicious dimples into full play as she said:

'Ah! I see you are not at all jealous; that is good of you.'

Stuart started a little.

'I have no right to be jealous. Why should I be!'

'Bachelor friends of the family are sometimes, when they see the girls they petted as children surrounded by new admirers.'

'I am not acting up to my *rôle* then as a bachelor family friend, for I am glad that Miss Hepburn should be admired as she deserves to be.'

'That is so nice and fatherly of you; you must feel almost like a father to the dear girl. She was only six when you first knew her, was not she?'

‘Yes, but I was only fifteen, Mrs. Hepburn ; have you forgotten that ?’

‘Ah, well ; rather too young a father, to be sure ! What a silly thing for me to say ! But of course with the real difference that there is in age you are able to look calmly on and be glad to see her admired by younger men.’

Stuart coloured hotly.

‘I do not quite understand you ; I do not know what you mean by looking on calmly. I am not indifferent, you must know that, to anything concerning Miss Hepburn ; I care so much that I should wish her to be happy in the way she chooses as the best for herself. If I found that she really loved some one else who could make her truly happy, I would learn to be content.’

These words moved Mrs. Hepburn, not to kindly feeling, but to fear lest he might make a confidant of her by a more open declaration of his attachment for Marjorie. That was no part of her plan, so regardless of his pleading looks, she made signals to two ladies who were riding near and kept up an animated conversation with them and the major until the latter had to remount his horse and ride back to Calcutta. Some hours passed before he could quietly think over Mrs. Hepburn’s words and analyse the pain they had given him ; he could not trust her, and yet he could not bear to believe her guilty of actual false-speaking. It was so terrible a thing to speak untruly that surely she, a lady and Judge Hepburn’s wife, could not have so spoken.

Yet, could it be possible that Marjorie should have been so easily attracted by a stranger, a man who had been scarcely nine weeks in Calcutta? These reflections ended in the determination to take the earliest possible opportunity of seeing Marjorie and Mr. Ericson together, and that opportunity would be the ball which was to be given at 'The Aloes' in the middle of the coming week, and to which he had been invited.

On the morning of the ball-day all Calcutta was talking of Major Hepburn's appointment to the governorship of the town and district of B——, which seemed to give more general satisfaction than such events usually afford; but it was said that the favoured man had accepted it with reluctance, and in this statement there was somewhat of truth, although he knew it was too good an offer to be refused by one whose worldly fortunes depended upon preferment, or by one who also desired to be faithful to the duties of his special calling and to be diligent in business; and yet nevertheless he did feel unwilling to leave Calcutta for a long absence at this particular juncture, and in his present uncertainty respecting his chances of a happy marriage.

As all the world was talking of this appointment Judge Hepburn's household was of course no exception. Mr. Ericson called the major a lucky dog; Mrs. Hepburn's eyes sparkled as she bent over her plate and said:

'Dear good creature, he quite deserves it.'

'There is no doubt of his deserving this and other

good things,' said the judge; but his eyes had in them no sparkle; on the contrary, they were full of perplexity, and he could not forbear glancing curiously, though surreptitiously, at Marjorie. He wished that he could speak to her and ascertain her feelings towards Stuart, but the propriety code of the day closed his mouth; even fathers were not in the habit of speaking on such subjects to their daughters, at any rate not until a formal proposal had been made by the gentleman supposed to be attached.

When the ladies had got together in their morning-room and were alone, except for the presence of a servant, who did not comprehend much English, crouching on the threshold, and the near neighbourhood of two tailors, sitting cross-legged and working in the passage outside, Mrs. Hepburn said—

'Our dear, good old friend, the major, is fortunate, is he not?'

'Yes, he is fortunate; but I do not see why you should call him old—he is not yet thirty.'

'I know that; but he has such an old-fashioned manner, such a confirmed bachelor air, that one never reckons him amongst the young men of one's acquaintance—at least I do not. Perhaps he may show more of *le jeune homme* in his intercourse with you!'

'I see very little of him in any character, Aunt Cecilia.'

Mrs. Hepburn reflected a moment. 'Ah, that is

true. He comes here very seldom; I recall now that it is so; but I think I know why. I *think* I can gather his reasons from some remarks he made to me the other day; last week it was—that Wednesday when you were too ill with headache to drive with me on the racecourse. He took pity on my loneliness, and took two or three turns with me in the carriage. Wasn't it attentive of him? But gentlemen always are attentive to me, and I cannot imagine why; for one would not think they could care at all for a silly creature such as I am, an old married woman too! Isn't it good of them to take any notice of me, May?'

Marjorie laughed. 'What a question to ask me! You are pretty, you know, and men like prettiness.'

'Nonsense, May!—pretty! A woman of my age, almost quite thirty. For shame to make fun of me like that!' And Mrs. Hepburn plumed herself very much as a pet paroquet might do. The graceful gesture was lost upon Marjorie, who said, hesitatingly—

'You have not told me what it was that the major said to you that day.'

'I don't know that I ought to repeat it; I suppose he said it confidentially. Gentlemen always are confidential with me, telling me all their little secrets. But there, I hate making mysteries, and you might imagine something worse, although it wasn't exactly nice. The fact is, May, I fear the dear major fancies that we want to throw you in his way. He remembers that the poor dear general

certainly did do so, and he seems to be afraid lest you might care too much for a man who is too wedded to money-making and getting on in his profession to care for any other bride.'

'What did he say, Aunt Cecilia?' inquired May, in hard, cold tones, which told her aunt's skilled ear that all was going on as she could desire.

'If you *will* hear, he said that he would be quite content if he knew that you did not care for him, and that you were happy with some one else; he would be *glad*, he said. He showed such a kind, fatherly interest that it was really touching. He has, as Farquhar says, a loyal, faithful nature.'

'He is very kind,' said Marjorie, with ominous steadiness of tone, 'and if knowledge of the state of my feelings is all that he requires to make him content and glad, he may soon arrive at that blissful condition.'

Mrs. Hepburn clasped her hands, "and bending forward in an attitude of tragic despair, particularly embellishing to the pretty, baby face, exclaimed—

'May, dear, now you are angry, and that you should not be, for the major *was* so nice and kind. He was not talking about marriage—you must quite understand that—only about people admiring you; and he was quite fatherly and nice, and it was all in confidence, you know, so don't think any more about it.'

Marjorie held her beautiful head a little higher. 'I do not care about his fatherly manner; he is not my father, nor is he old enough to take up such

a part. But did he say those very words, Aunt Cecilia?’

‘Of course, dear, or I would not have repeated them; *à propos* of your being admired, he said what I told you, and I think the meaning was obvious.’

Marjorie, like Stuart, could not believe that Mrs. Hepburn would tell a deliberate falsehood. It is only ungrateful people who readily and easily suspect others of false speaking; liars are rarely duped by liars. A silence followed, which Mrs. Hepburn was the first to break.

‘Dearest, you won’t betray me? It was silly of me to tell you, but I always *am* so silly; I do wish I had some wise person always beside me to tell me what I ought and ought not to say. But the fact is, I could not endure the thought that such a nice, good man might imagine that you wished to throw yourself at his head, when really you don’t care in the least for him.’

‘Of course not. I am not likely to care for a man who does not care for me.’

‘Of course not, dear, as you say. I rather wish there was a mutual liking, he is so good and excellent; but there are many other good men happily. Now, will you let me go with you to your room, and see if Roselle has altered your dress properly?’

Mrs. Hepburn kept her niece fully occupied during the remainder of the day; even during the afternoon *siesta*, she followed her to her room, and taking up her station on another couch, read aloud

from a recently imported novel until she succeeded in putting both her and herself to sleep; thus Marjorie had not a minute for meditation until she was having her hair dressed by her Portuguese Ayah. Then her thoughts at once flew to Stuart; hot indignation filled her heart and flushed her face. She felt sure that those words which were rankling in her memory must have been called forth by some remark previously made by her aunt; yet she could not conjure up any form of speech on Mrs. Hepburn's part, which could really justify the major's remarks, and she determined that that evening should leave him in no doubt as to her indifference to him.

That brilliant ball was henceforth a markedly sad era in Stuart Hepburn's life, a sorrowful memory for many after years. He saw enough to convince him that Mrs. Hepburn had but told him the truth, and he began to feel almost grateful to her for having in a measure prepared him for what he had to see that night. According to a fashion prevalent at that date, though quite discarded a few years later, Marjorie had but one partner during the whole evening, and that partner was Mr. Ericson; and between the long, slow-paced minuets, and equally long but more sprightly country-dances, she conversed chiefly with him, although she did make a point of frequently addressing Major Hepburn, and congratulating him with wonderful ease of manner upon his appointment; but after any little chat with him allowed herself to be soon again engrossed by Mr. Ericson, whom Stuart heard talking about Bath,



where Marjorie had spent part of one season immediately before her return to India. Stuart, requiring to leave the ball early in order to hasten the making of his arrangements for his departure for B——, which was to take place in three days' time, sought his hostess to say good night. She was standing beside her husband, and as he drew near he heard her say : ' Was not it a pretty attention of Mr. Ericson to send May those flowers she is wearing ? He does things quite in the Parisian style.'

A few hours before his departure from Calcutta, Major Hepburn made a formal farewell call upon Mrs. Hepburn and her niece. There were several other visitors in the smaller drawing-room which the ladies were occupying that day, and there was no opportunity for more than the customary phrases of a courteous farewell. Marjorie, who a few months before would have shown her genuine interest in her own old friend and her father's favourite, was still smarting too sorely from the poison which had been dropped into her heart to be other than coldly polite and indifferent in manner. With drooping head and languid step Stuart crossed the great outer hall, where he met the Judge, who accompanied him out into the pillared and awning-shaded colonnade, not able to resist casting a strange inquiring glance the while ; probably the major perceived and partly understood it, for he said hurriedly, and a little below his breath—

' I have no longer any hope in that matter about

which I spoke to you some months ago ; from what Mrs. Hepburn has told me, and indeed from Miss Hepburn's own manner, I see that there is no chance for me, and I will not be the one to make her unhappy by intruding upon her contrary to her desire.'

Mr. Hepburn was startled by these words. 'My dear fellow, I don't pretend to understand the ways of women ; our own country folk have a proverb which speaks of them as "kittle cattle ;" but I believe that to be as true a proverb which says, "Faint heart never won fair lady !" If I were you I would boldly try my luck.'

'It would be useless, Judge ; her father's daughter would never have treated me as she has lately done if she had not wished to show me that I must not venture to approach ; she has been honest and upright, as she could hardly fail of being, and perhaps I shall some day see that all has been for the best. You know that in any case I could not marry for some time to come, and she shall not be disquieted and disturbed by me.'

Stuart was not sorry (though the Judge might be) that at that moment a messenger from Government House, bearing an official message, appeared, and that he was thus enabled to get himself away without further words ; but when the Judge had read and answered his message, he found time to think over all that Stuart had said, and to make himself thoroughly uncomfortable concerning both his sorrowful manner and the words he had spoken.

## CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Stuart had left him, Mr. Hepburn felt far from comfortable; he was sure that consciously or unconsciously there had been mischievous interference on the part of some one or other; and when alone with his wife, he said, in serious tones—

‘How was it that Major Hepburn left Calcutta without saying a word to Marjorie?’

‘Without saying a word to Marjorie! Why, he was here this afternoon, and talking to her a long time.’

‘Cecilia, you are absurd; you know what I mean. Why has he gone away without making her a proposal of marriage, as he had intended to do?’

‘I thought that you had given up all idea of his doing so, and were quite willing to put Mr. Ericson in her way.’

‘I never led you to think so; you women are incomparably foolish in your imaginations; you must please excuse my plain speaking, but as you took such a silly, unfounded idea into your head, I conclude that you have acted upon it only too well.’

‘What do you mean, Farquhar?’

‘I wish you to remember and tell me exactly

what you said to Major Hepburn, which has made him believe that May does not care for him ? ’

‘ I never told him that she did not care for him ; perhaps I did not give him strong hopes, for I do not think that she has any great affection for him. ’

‘ I cannot understand it ; you must have managed badly, Cecilia ; and I think that you will one day regret having put any hindrance in the way of your niece’s marriage with one who is not only a good and honourable man, which is, or ought to be, of the first importance, but also a man likely to be highly distinguished, not merely as a soldier, but also as a skilful manager of delicate negotiations with the native courts, a man who will be wealthy and great if his life be spared but a few years. ’

Mr. Hepburn had seldom spoken so plainly, and his wife felt awed and almost regretful. Had she really done injury to May’s worldly prospects, the only part of the matter that she cared about ? In her confusion she began to parley—

‘ How do you know that he will be sent on such missions ? Few military men are. ’

‘ Very few ; but Hepburn is one peculiarly adapted to the business, his intimate acquaintance with the native dialects—there is scarcely one of which he does not know something—and his strong, keen, common sense, combined with remarkable tact, render him fitted for diplomatic as well as military service ; he has long been a marked man at headquarters ; the governor-general thinks highly of him, and that he will rise rapidly and surely is

about as certain as anything in this uncertain world can be.'

Mrs. Hepburn felt keenly annoyed; she might have spared herself the trouble of manœuvring with Mr. Anstruther, who no doubt had known perfectly how matters stood, and had played with her ignorance merely to please her feminine vanity, and love of conferring favours; so annoyed was she, that, forgetting her usual *naïve* childlikeness of speech, she said bitterly—

'But granting that he does rise, the more distinguished he may be the more it will be remembered who and what he was, a humble, distant relation of yours, a beggar-boy whom General Hepburn romantically took out of his proper station, one who is not even by birth entitled to the name he bears. All that will be remembered, depend upon it.'

The Judge was silent from horror-stricken surprise; now indeed he was sure that there had not been fair play; but that there had been absolute falsity, he, unconsciously following the example of Stuart and Marjorie, would not allow himself to believe; yet his words, when he did at last speak, had a severity his wife had seldom heard as addressed to herself.

'You have shocked me greatly, Cecilia, by your cruel pride and heartlessness, by what I should call ill breeding, did I not know your antecedents. I could not have imagined that a person come of a long line of noble ancestors could show so much vulgarity; but I also see that you have been to

blame throughout this business, and that it must be in a great measure your fault that the man who saved my late brother's life at the risk of his own, and who is himself one of the best men I know, has been disappointed of his dearest hopes.'

Mrs. Hepburn listened in amazement and anger ; although she neither loved right principle nor her husband enough for his just reproof to give her wholesome pain, she yet loved herself so much that the reproof stung her inexpressibly ; and in dread of losing power over the judge, and with it the opportunity of scheming, she put on a penitent air, wonderfully imitative of the prettily pathetic repentance of a child, and said coaxingly—

'I am so sorry if I have vexed you ; I have managed badly ; but truly I do not think that Marjorie cares for the major ; and besides, however stupid I may have been, I could not have prevented his making her a proposal, which he certainly has not done.

'Very well, my dear Cecilia, let the matter rest. I may have spoken over harshly, because, after all, women should not be judged harshly for a want of wisdom which it is not perhaps desirable they should have too much of. I do not suppose you intended to do real harm, but I own I regret that things should have taken the course they have.'

'But you will not continue to do so if Mr. Ericson should come forward to propose to her ?'

'Do you mean to tell me that Marjorie likes him ?'

'I think she does ; and why not, Farquhar ?'

‘You women are incomprehensible. To prefer that man to Stuart, it is indeed astonishing!’

‘I cannot understand you; he is good-looking, well off, with an assured position, the son of a baronet; probably will be one himself.’

‘Well, Cecilia, if you must make me drag forth my secret pride of birth, and the only merit in which feeling, in my opinion, is its being secret, I confess that I should prefer the humblest scion of the house of Hepburn to the son of the first titled man of his race, and one who obtained his title by some not particularly clean-handed bit of political jobbery; but as I tell you, that is a secret feeling which I am ashamed to bring out to the light of day; and as you observe, the young man has already an assured position, and will have more spending money than Stuart will probably ever allow himself to retain possession of; but in all other respects, I should have thought that any one might have seen how superior Stuart is to Ericson. I do not profess to be a religious man; it is difficult to be that in the practical heathenism in which we live—nay, God help us!—a worse state in its indifference to all religion than that of the poor wretches around us whom we call heathen, but who do, at least, fear their deaf and dumb gods, if they do not love them; yet, in the midst of all these difficulties, idolatry around and indifference within us, Major Hepburn continues to be godly without cant, and to be a living sermon without setting

himself up to preach. I don't think that Mr. Ericson can be said to be that style of man.'

'I suppose he is as good as most of his neighbours.'

'I have no doubt of it,' the Judge replied, dryly; and therewith the conversation between the husband and wife dropped; but the latter lay awake long, planning schemes whereby to bring about the marriage which she now felt herself pledged to effect. She well knew that she had a peculiar nature to deal with.

Ralph Ericson's strongest characteristics were obstinacy and selfishness; the latter, the lowest type of that despicable sin, for it was not that which on the impulse of the moment is led away by strong passing emotion into careless disregard of the rights and feelings of others; but, on the contrary, it might almost be said that he was selfish upon principle, for, after close calculation as to cause and effect, ways and means, he carried out well-digested, carefully-prepared actions, each one of which furthered his own wishes, and at the same time deeply pained and injured one or more persons (the number mattered little to him) who had chanced to stand in the way of this accomplishment of his will, and whom he rolled out of his path as contemptuously and indifferently as though they had been merely obstructive stones. Wealth was not so much the object of his desires as was the attainment of power. To obtain absolute supremacy over



as many of his fellow-beings as was possible was his chief ambition, and next thereto in force of strength was the desire to have what other men could not obtain; to have been first in any race or combat would have been as nothing to him unless he had also been first by standing on the fallen form of the man who had almost distanced or conquered him. He was deficient in the power of imagination, and therefore had little temptation to speak untruly; and fully satisfied that none was wiser or better than himself, he had none of the lingering, heart-gnawing fears of inferiority which lead people who are called conceited and vain, to vaunt their own doings and sayings, in the pitiful hope that such vaunting may be echoed by the lips of the men whom they know to be their superiors. He, on the contrary, was so full of self-conceit, that there was no room in his mind for the wish that others should praise him, for was not he superior to all?

As a child he had given his nurses but little trouble, and as a schoolboy, even the severe pedagogues of the harsh-mannered generation had been unable to find much serious fault with him; and yet, spite of this propriety of conduct, he had never been a favourite with his contemporaries during any of the several ages of his life, and his very mother could scarcely have said that she loved him as other mothers love their sons. This was the man to whom Mrs. Hepburn schemed to give her niece, and did so, not in ignorance of his character,

but with clear knowledge thereof, as was proved by the way she set about effecting her purpose. She played upon his desire of obtaining what other persons had failed to obtain, and upon his love of surmounting opposition by hinting at the number of men who had wished to marry Marjorie, making especial mention of Major Hepburn in the list of lovers, adding that the Judge so greatly favoured the major's suit that he would not willingly further that of any other man. The exceedingly wide-awake, cautious-natured Ralph Ericson, who looked upon Mrs. Hepburn as a ridiculously silly woman, not widely removed from an idiot, fell into the net that her deft fingers wove for his particularly steady feet, and within a short time was paying his addresses in due form to Marjorie, paying them well too, with all the necessary formalities and punctilious etiquette of the day which he considered it due to himself not to abate by the smallest iota—not a bow, not a look, not a kiss of the hand which it was the correct thing to give, was omitted.

Marjorie, who was good and pure-hearted, but not, at that time of her life, skilled in reading character, considered his manner was all that it should be, and felt grateful for the delicate attentions which, though stiff and formal, were yet so marked as to leave her in no doubt as to their meaning; here was no uncertainty, and there was no need for her to torment herself with the fear that she had manifested an unmaidenly degree of liking for one indifferent to her as her aunt had


contrived to make her torment herself concerning all her late intercourse with Stuart Hepburn. She believed, as all the young gentlewomen of her day did believe, that it was her duty to marry if she could do so suitably, and what could be more suitable than the marriage now offered to her? for it was offered, with fitting ceremony, eight weeks after the departure of Major Hepburn from Calcutta. The offer was accepted, and the wedding fixed to take place in less than three months. Mrs. Hepburn breathed more freely, her manner being childishly jubilant. Marjorie's manner grew pensive, which society considered delicately fitting, and Mr. Ericson's was unexceptionable in its constant and elaborately devoted attention.

Whilst Stuart was travelling to the chief town of the distant district intrusted to his governorship, his thoughts often turned to Mr. Hepburn's words and manner during the last brief interview he had had with him, and the more he thought, the more he accused himself of having been too precipitate, of having too readily believed that Marjorie did not care for him; there was no doubt about the measure of his own caring, for his heart glowed and leapt at the entrance of even the tiny, faint spark of hope which the Judge's words had lighted. Under the influence of this sweet hope—all the sweeter because so pale-tinted and feeble—he wrote to Marjorie an earnest, manly letter, such as might have rejoiced the heart of any maiden to receive, but which never reached the maiden for whom it

was designed. The coolies who carried letters and parcels from this remote district to Calcutta had to ford a river on the journey; the river was more swollen than usual, and the particular coolie who bore Major Hepburn's private letters was drowned. When his body was recovered, which was not until after considerable loss of time, his companions, perplexed by the condition in which they found his papers and packages, turned back to consult Major Hepburn as to his wishes concerning them. He was too ill with a sharp attack of jungle-fever to be even told of what had happened, and before his full recovery he received the news of Marjorie's engagement from the Judge, who had written with much kindness, not venturing to express open pity, but delicately hinting at the sympathy he felt, and not hiding that he himself was not delighted at the intended match. As he had confessed to his wife, he instinctively felt that the man whom some people might deem the more humbly born of the rival lovers was the truer gentleman, the truer aristocrat. The Judge might have been pardoned for believing—even though he was ashamed of the belief—that it was preferable to be even a distant relation of the ancient Hepburns of Hepburn, a family ennobled for honourable and loyal services in the reign of Malcolm Cean Mohr, a family which even then had been great and powerful, than to be the son of the first baronet of his race, a man who, for some bit of political service, had drawn his family out of the mists of obscurity; but these

were the most private feelings of the Judge, certainly not communicated either to Major Hepburn or to Marjorie. That was a terrible day for Stuart, the one in which this news reached him; the trouble and anguish brought a relapse of the fever, and for many days his life was in danger. He was tended by a young native soldier whom he was trying to bring to the knowledge and acceptance of Christianity; but this man, kind and faithful as he was, could not sympathise with his master, for he could not even comprehend his pitiful ravings; in his delirium, Stuart returned to the Doric Scotch of his youth, and kept saying over and over again, 'Ay, my bonnie, wee leddie, I'll keep the bubble-jock awa frae ye, an' a' that could harm ye; ye needna be feared o' ony o' thae fearsome beasts wi' me beside ye.' Many tender reminiscences of childhood and youth fell from his lips in the companioned and tended loneliness in which he lay; bits of talk with his grandfather and Hamish—sayings of Mr. Lindsay's which had sunk deep into his heart; the memory of his vow, and the very words with which it had been made. All these welled often to his fevered lips, but ever and aye, like the 'ower words' of a song, came back the tender names wherewith he had been wont to please and reassure the little Mistress Marjorie in that bright early summer of long ago—the summer spent in the birch-shaded, stream-fed hollows of 'The Dens.' The days when the fever had left him and when he began to grow better were perhaps more

terribly painful than even the first had been; there were even a few hours when, because life did not seem worth living, he was tempted to murmur at its late restoration, but with such a man such a feeling could not be yielded to, could not even wield its terrible warfare more than a few hours, for sturdy resistance killed it, and as there was no bitter selfishness and no resentment of heart against either Marjorie or Mr. Ericson, he was, after the first anguish was deadened, enabled to face the future with resolute steadfastness, and even to be thankful that henceforth nothing could interfere with the fulfilment of his vow, nothing retard the work of its accomplishment. He made no new protestations even to himself; there was no occasion for them. There are some natures, rare amongst women, rarer still amongst men, who, if a tenderly-loved object be removed from their outward enjoyment, either by death or by estrangement, can never again set up another object in exactly the same place; can never love with the same absorbing, concentrated love as of old; and of such a nature was Stuart Alexander Hepburn. Far and near did Stuart seek for a wedding-gift that would be to his mind, and at last found and sent a set of pearls, perfect in beauty of form and hue, not marred by any meretricious jeweller's work, being simply strings for throat and hair and arms, of large glistening beads, each as lovely in its exquisite curve and swell as its neighbour. Even the earrings were two pear-shaped pearls, a larger and a



smaller, joined together by delicate, yet strongly-twisted threads of gold. The little answering note of thanks was laid away with that water-stained, blistered letter (which had never reached its destination) in the recesses of his desk, and then, with full purpose of heart and resolute will, Stuart took up his life again, with all the manifold cares and duties, and even the pleasures and rewards, which it might bring to him, but which was no longer to be brightened by the hope of domestic delights and marriage joys.

## CHAPTER X.

To follow Major Hepburn's life during the four or five years following Marjorie's marriage would be to give a history of India during that period, and of some of its most memorable and exciting wars, led by Britain's greatest military hero—him whom for many long years Britons, with no fear of being misunderstood, have loved to call '*the Duke*'; and to do this would be outside my purpose and beyond my powers. It is enough to say that the humbler hero of my simple tale conducted himself heroically during that long and arduous campaign, winning glory and renown—no glory of them all dearer to his heart than that of the praise and approbation personally bestowed upon him by that unequalled warrior-leader, that chief of his soldiers' hearts, Arthur Wellesley.

During this period of time Stuart had never spent more than a few days in Calcutta, but now he had come with the intention of remaining several weeks, and, to his own surprise, found himself famous amongst his fellow-men, and an interesting hero in the estimation of the ladies, for he had lost his right arm and received a severe chest



wound in the storming of Delhi. He was now full colonel, and had every prospect of rising higher in his profession, and he found persons crowding around him, paying him attentions and courting his notice, so much so that one day Judge Hepburn said laughingly to his niece, who with her husband was dining at 'The Aloes'—

'My dear Marjorie, you should have married Colonel Hepburn; he is quite a hero of romance. All the world is running after him, from the Governor-General down to the most miserable little "griff."'

The Judge might speak laughingly and think no more of his words after he had spoken them, but Marjorie had cause to remember them. She had already suffered much on account of Stuart. Shortly after her marriage she saw her husband in his true colours as a narrow-minded, pitiless tyrant, and on the first occasion in which he had chosen to be 'displeased with her,' to use his own formula, he reproached her with the affection with which Major Hepburn had regarded her. Her astonished denial had seemed to him nothing but a bit of hypocritical acting, and only 'deepened his just displeasure.' The Judge's careless speech revived the accusation and the consequent pain, and bitterly May regretted that it had been spoken.

It was a grief to Colonel Hepburn to gather, from the remarks of various persons, that Mrs. Ericson was not a happy woman; to learn that her health was feeble, and that she was a mourning

mother, having twice given birth to infants, only, as it seemed, to lose them. His kind heart was touched, and without thought of self or of the possible pain that an interview with her might cause him, he longed to see her, and offer his sympathy in the sorrows which could be spoken of—her weak health and the loss of her infants. In his simplicity he did not notice that Mr. Ericson alone, of all the men of standing and position in Calcutta, had not called upon him, and thus on the first occasion of meeting him, which was at an entertainment at Government House, he accosted him, saying cordially—

‘How is Mrs. Ericson? Pray tell her that I hope to have the pleasure of calling on her to-morrow.’

Mr. Ericson paused a moment, in which he looked at Colonel Hepburn from head to foot, being obliged to raise his eyes considerably in part of the process; then he replied, distinctly and slowly—

‘I have not the honour of your acquaintance, and Mrs. Ericson never receives the visits of gentlemen not known to me. Allow me to wish you good evening.’

Mr. Ericson moved away, leaving Stuart with a face paler than it had ever been in battle, whilst the bystanders closed in around him, earnestly expressing their sympathy with him and indignation against Mr. Ericson; but the Colonel gently put them all aside, and, after making his apologies to his host, went to his temporary home in the bungalow of a brother officer, to seek in solitude

and silence strength to bear the blow which had been ruthlessly inflicted upon him. He knew well the code of honour, so called, of the day, and knowing also how impossible it would be to him to carry out its requirements, he foresaw the contempt and coldness with which many of his friends would henceforth regard him; but even that foresight was as nothing to the pain of having been insulted by Marjorie's husband, and cut off for ever from intercourse with his benefactor's daughter—the petted plaything and playmate of his own youth. His life had known many sorrowful hours, but he was inclined now to think that it had seldom known one more sorrowful than this: and yet there remained in store for him a grief more keenly painful, a contest more intensely sharp, than even this with which he was now battling. He could scarcely be regretful when, early on the following day, he learnt that his plans must be changed, and that he must immediately proceed to the seat of the late war, as fresh insurrections were apprehended. He felt thankful to be compelled to leave Calcutta; but before going he felt it to be necessary that he should call at 'The Aloes,' to take leave of Judge Hepburn and his wife.

A servant admitted him into the outer drawing-room, where he found no one, and after waiting in solitude for several minutes was about to go away, to knock at the door of the Judge's business-room, when his steps were arrested by the sound of sobs and smothered cries proceeding from the small inner

room, into which he immediately went. At first he could see no one in the deeply-shaded light which was all that the closed jalousies admitted; but after a minute's peering gaze he saw, rising from a sofa, a lady endeavouring to be calm and to speak quietly, but who, with the endeavour, broke down again and burst into fresh tears, the sight and sound of which wrung Stuart's heart, for the lady was Marjorie, whom he had last seen in the full radiance of very rare beauty, and to all appearance rejoicing in the innocent gladness of young womanhood. Fain would he have comforted her, but no fitting words would come, and he could only place her cushions more conveniently, and pour out for her a glass of iced water from a red jar standing on a table near. Mrs. Ericson was soon able to speak more composedly, though her tones were still low and faltering.

'I must apologise for startling you,' she said. 'It was very foolish of me, but I am not strong.'

'So I have heard, and I am grieved to see you so distressed. Is there nothing that I can do to help you?'

'Nothing—I fear you can do nothing,' Marjorie replied, unable to say more.

'I wish indeed that I could; but yet I think that I may say that in all your troubles, whatever they may be, you have my sincere sympathy, and will have, what may be of better use to you, my poor prayers.'

Marjorie looked up quickly. 'I thank you—oh! I thank you. Will you indeed pray for me? No

one has done that for me since my father died, and I need help, for I am so very wretched.'

Stuart hesitated. 'I fear that that may be so; but yet, dear madam, in the worst of troubles we can never be wholly miserable. You do not need me to remind you of the one true Friend Who can never fail us, never forsake us.'

'But I do need that reminding. I seldom even hear His name; and I own to feeling surprised to hear you speak of Him. It is such an unusual thing to do, that I believe in your courage even more thoroughly than I did when I heard of your noble conduct before Delhi.'

'Dear madam, if I did not strive to serve my God, I could not have done what you are so good as to admire before Delhi, or any other act of duty.'

These words stirred Marjorie strangely; they made religion seem a real living principle, and not a set of dry creeds, and still more dry forms of worship. In her bodily weakness her tears came again, and with irresistible impulse she exclaimed—

'And are you the man whom Mr. Ericson insulted, and whom he has forbidden me to receive in our house!'

Colonel Hepburn was silent, and Marjorie, a crimson flush rising to her pallid cheek, said—

'You must allow me to apologise to you, my own and my father's friend, for that terrible rudeness; you will try and pardon it, will you not?'

'It is pardoned, madam; but may I venture to ask if you know what caused it? Does Mr. Ericson

imagine himself in any way wronged or injured by me ?’

‘Oh ! I cannot bear to tell you ; and yet why not, since his fancy is all unfounded ? He imagines that once you—that you cared for me, and proposed to me, and when I tell him that indeed you never did, he will not believe me, but says that I speak falsely, and that Aunt Cecilia assured him you had done so, which *cannot* be true, for it was my aunt herself who told me of your confiding to her how glad you would be to hear of my being happily married, and other things, which proved that you did not care in that way. When I ask her what it was she said to Mr. Ericson, she declares that she said nothing to lead him into such an idea ; but I cannot induce her to try and set the matter straight with him, and prove my truth to him, for she fears him dreadfully—and no wonder.’

Here Marjorie broke off, shuddering with an air of utter dread, which turned Stuart’s heart sick, whilst indignation made him involuntarily grasp the handle of his sword, and long, with momentary madness, to draw it in her behalf. He walked to the end of the room in order to regain self-control. This was really the fiercest struggle against temptation that his virtuous life had ever known ; his being was shaken to its centre, and he longed wildly and passionately to clasp that beautiful, suffering woman—all the dearer because she was suffering—to the heart which had loved her so long and so faithfully ; but the love was just *so* real, *so* faithful, that such a

desire, although it scorched him with its heat, soon burnt itself out; for would it be worth calling love, the passion which would inflict the deadliest possible injury upon the object professedly dear? On the smouldering ashes of this first impulse rose another, almost as fiery and as strong—the impulse to acknowledge to May that he did love, and had loved her, and had indeed actually proposed marriage to her, although she had never received that proposal; yet this impulse also was quenched. Why should he grieve her needlessly now, when there could be no return to his love, and when it was more clearly evident to him than it had ever been that she did not feel for him what is technically known as love? But whilst he was thus reflecting, and fighting one of life's bloodless battles, Marjorie grew alarmed at his silence, and having followed him, said, whilst resting heavily against a table for support—

‘Oh, Colonel! I hope you are not angry with me? I could not help telling you, that you might understand why he was so rude to you—if only he would but believe me, and see that he has taken up a silly fancy—and indeed he ought to believe me—for if such a kind, dear friend as you were had wished me to marry him, I could not have refused.’

These words of Marjorie's, uttered in innocent unconsciousness of their full meaning, almost undid Stuart's hardly-won victory—almost put to flight his lately-formed noble resolutions. In the agony of that moment he seemed to himself helpless, powerless to refrain from evil; it was, as it were, impos-

sible not to sin. Nevertheless, the man who had trained himself, day by day, and hour by hour, to resistance of small temptations, was not left without the needed strength in this supreme moment, when all the old weapons of warfare seemed blunt. The hand that he had eagerly stretched out, fell by his side ; the bended head was raised, and, exerting the full strength of his manliness to quiet and subdue the blaze in his eyes, and to steady the tones of his voice, he said—

‘I am not angry, dear madam ; it was kind of you to trust an old friend with this explanation, and I hope that ere long your husband will believe the statement which you in all truth have made to him. Time will surely remove his prejudice against me, but that that may the sooner happen, I think you will agree with me that we had better suspend our intercourse for the present ; indeed we must do so, for I am summoned immediately to the seat of the late war, and I know not when I may be again in Calcutta.’

‘You are going away at once ?’ gasped Marjorie, sinking into a chair as she spoke.

‘To-morrow, dear madam.’

‘And perhaps to battle ! It is too dreadful !’

‘Nay ! is that a speech for a soldier’s daughter to make—for the descendant of many heroes ? Have I not been in many a battle, and has not my head always been covered therein ?’

‘I think you will be safe ; nothing can harm one so good as you.’



‘Not if God so will it, madam ; but as I have much of preparation yet to make I must say good-bye.’ Marjorie stood up again to take the offered hand which she could not help keeping a while in her grasp ; he was so true, so strong, this man, that she could hardly endure to let him go ; and he, strong and true-minded, saw that, all unknown to herself, the young woman loved him, and that one loving word from him would rouse within her the deep, passionate affection of which she was capable, and although his heart leapt up again at the consciousness that he could have been loved by this woman, nay, could even now be loved by her, he did not speak that word ; the battle had been fought and won ; he would not bring even the most transitory stain upon the purity which was dearer to him than his own life ; he spoke no word, and perilously near though that sweet and lovely face was to his own breast, he did not draw it there, he did not even return the soft pressure of her hand ; but taking his own gently away, said, ‘ God bless you, my dear madam. I shall live in hope of hearing that all misunderstandings are cleared away, and that you are a truly happy woman.’ The next instant Colonel Hepburn had left the room, and Marjorie sinking back into the arm-chair said, half aloud, ‘ I am sure if Ralph had seen the Colonel, he would have known easily enough that he has never been in love with me, or with any woman.’

Had Stuart heard her he could have said again,

with added thankfulness, “‘He hath covered my head in the day of battle.’”

Stuart was thankful to find Mr. Hepburn’s business-room (sometimes with remembrance of British fashion called the study) unoccupied, and to have a few minutes of uninterrupted quiet in which to aim at recovery from the severe mental strain of the past half-hour; the minutes were but few, for shortly he heard Mrs. Hepburn’s voice, and going out into the hall to meet her, he requested a private interview, which request she granted with considerable trepidation. She had been really annoyed by the scene at Government House, and sat now in embarrassed silence waiting for the Colonel to speak.

‘I have been with Mrs. Ericson for the last half-hour, madam, and I am grieved to gather that her husband discredits her denial of my affection for her; you best know how it is that *she* can truthfully deny all knowledge of my feelings. I will not reproach you, though I believe I have full cause to do so; but because of this forbearance I beg of you to have pity upon this poor lady, and confirm to Mr. Ericson her statement that she certainly never knew or was aware of any affection on my part other than that of an old friend of her childhood; I do beg of you for her father’s sake to do her this kindness.’

‘Then you have not told her of your former affection for her?’ exclaimed Mrs. Hepburn, in

amazement at what even she could feel to be noble reticence.

‘No, truly not, madam, why should I have pained her needlessly, for even though she had never cared for me in that way, yet her kindly nature would feel regret and pain on my account; therefore, as you were silent to her when to have spoken would have been right and kind, I hope that you will still be silent, when to speak would be both wrong and unkind.’

‘Indeed, Colonel, you are a good man!’ cried Mrs. Hepburn, speaking without dissimulation, as she had seldom spoken since earliest childhood. Considering all that had come and gone, Stuart may perhaps be pardoned for his answer, given with as much of a sneer as chivalry would allow his face to wear in addressing a woman.

‘I wish, madam, you had seen fit to think so earlier; but, pardon me for this harsh word. I am trying not to think of myself. I only beg you to help and comfort Mrs. Ericson by telling her husband the truth, the whole truth.’

‘Oh! I dare not: positively I dare not; you have no idea what a man he is, cold and cruel! he would look at me *so*, and he would tell my husband. I cannot, indeed; I cannot confess to him.’

‘I do not ask you to make any elaborate confession, merely to say that your niece has told you of her annoyance at his disbelief of her statements respecting me, and to assure him that although you told him truly that I had proposed *for* her, that she

also speaks truly in saying that I never proposed to her ; will you do this, madam, and thus make some little atonement for the evil you have wrought ? ’

‘ I will ; yes, I will try to do what you ask ; and indeed I am truly sorry for all this, and for the way things have turned out ; I think I will never interfere in anybody’s affairs again as long as I live. ’

‘ That would be better, madam, than to interfere unkindly ; but I must thank you for promising to do your best to make my dear old friend happier, and now as I must finish my arrangements for immediate departure, I will say good-bye ; pray present my parting compliments to the Judge. ’

Mrs. Hepburn went straight to her room, and dismissing her ayah, threw herself upon a couch and wept bitterly. As far as her heart could be touched, it had been touched by the manliness and self-forgetting kindness of Stuart ; as much shame also as she was capable of feeling, she felt at having been lowered in the eyes of that good man ; and she almost wished that she could learn to become straightforward and honest in all things. She knew that she had always been a schemer, that she had schemed in the nursery to get the best ribbons for her wooden babies, and to have the largest allowance of jam and sweetmeats ; and schemed in the schoolroom to obtain undeserved prizes, and forbidden pleasures ; ever since, and always she had schemed, until acting a part had become the only real thing she ever did ; the meanness and miserableness of all this came upon her as by a flash of

lightning, and yet, she told herself that she could not alter now ; as she was and ever had been so she must continue to be ; but one good and righteous act at least she would do ; she would keep her promise to the man, who, though he knew her falseness, had yet gone away, perhaps to death, trusting in her word. There is no one utterly evil, and Mrs. Hepburn proved that in her there was still a remnant of good by doing even as she had resolved, and although she did shuffle even then, yet she contrived, at the cost of some real pain and self-humiliation, to exonerate Marjorie to her hard and pitiless tyrant of all duplicity and falsehood. She brought upon herself his withering scorn ; the man whom she had not wronged punished her with a harshness that the man whom she had bitterly wronged would never, could never, have used to one of her sex.

A few months after these events Mr. Ericson received the news of the death of his elder and only brother, and a letter from his father requesting his presence in England. It was with a heavy heart that Mrs. Hepburn saw her niece leave India, and thenceforth her own life daily grew less and less happy ; none of her schemes seemed to prosper ; her elder children died, her own health gradually failed, and with it, her beauty, and five years after Marjorie's departure for England, whilst still a comparatively young woman, she died somewhat suddenly and unexpectedly ; away from her husband, away from all her friends, at an up-country station


to which she had been sent for change of air, mourned perhaps by none but the Judge, who, forgetting his bitter disappointment in her, and the long years of mistrust she herself had sown in his heart, remembered only the beautiful face and winning graces of the bride of his youth.

## CHAPTER XI.

OCCASIONALLY, in some parts of Scotland, we are favoured with a genial May, a May of the poets; full of springing gladness, of the sudden bursting forth of foliage and flowers, and of the singing of birds; such an one comes sometimes to sheltered Ennerleddie, and came to it in the year 1819; the whole of the month was fine, but almost its brightest day was the twenty-fourth, when the town was astir, watching for the arrival of its own special hero, without whom could not take place the ceremony of the day, the event on account of which the ancient city and its neighbourhood were keeping high holiday.

All Ennerleddie was astir and in gala dress because Major-General Sir Stuart Alexander Hepburn, K.C.B., a whilom fellow-townsmen, was to arrive at mid-day, and to open, for its charitable purposes, that building which for more than three years had been growing up under the eyes of the people, absorbing much of their thoughts, and of their conversations in shop and market, and at kirk-gate. The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of this building had been accompanied by no noise or

demonstration. A one-armed soldierly-looking man had come on a two days' visit to the Provost, and had gone away as quietly as he had come; but no sooner had he left their town than the Ennerleddie folk awoke suddenly to a knowledge of whom they had had amongst them, and to a regretful shame that they had not given him a fitting reception. The Provost was blamed, the town councillors were blamed, the ministers were blamed, for having done as Sir Stuart Hepburn had requested them to do, and for having allowed no fuss or stir to be made about the munificent gift he offered to the town; and they found that their promise of silence could not be kept. An enthusiasm took possession of the sleepy old town; letters of thanks and letters of advice, congratulations and petitions, were sent to the newly-discovered hero, who, on account of his health—somewhat enervated by a residence of over thirty years in Eastern countries—was obliged to live for the present in the south of England; and he learnt from these letters, and from certain newspaper paragraphs, that he could not help being famous, and that his desire of 'doing good by stealth' could not be carried out. He submitted with a good grace, pleasant in its modest simplicity, to being made the temporary hero and idol in chief of his native town, answered the kind letters showered upon him, accepted invitations to visit at the houses of noblemen and gentlemen in the neighbourhood of Ennerleddie, and promised, when the building should be finished, to open it with all the ceremonies





that the ancient burgh might think proper to devise. Now, at last, the day and the hour had come, and the town welcomed its hero, who arrived from Cardross Castle in company with Lord Cardross, whose guest he then was. The militia regiments had turned out, and the clansmen of Lord Cardross, not forgetting the pipers in full dress, who reminded Stuart of his childhood's friend, Hamish McBean; his heart was indeed so full of sorrowful memories that he could not be said to be what is commonly called happy; it was with difficulty that the soldier who had never flinched before his enemies in the hour of battle, who hardly knew what the sensation of physical fear meant, could keep the tears from overflowing the eyes into which, spite of all efforts, they would ever and anon well up, and could nerve himself to smile and return the greetings of the crowds who thronged the quaint, narrow streets (still, at that date, devoid of all side pavements). He felt himself to be cold and stiff, and reproached himself with ingratitude; but Ennerleddie missed nothing from the low courteous bending of the head that perforce was uncovered, and the grave sweet smile. Amongst the women folk of all ranks there was but one opinion concerning his looks. Amongst the homely 'wives' passed from lip to lip murmurs of 'Eh! he's a bonnie man!' 'Eh! but he's handsome!' One woman, some fifteen years older than the General, and who had been intently examining him, exclaimed, after some sudden momentary uplifting of the eyes that fulness

of emotion had kept downcast, 'He minds me o' auld Maister Lindsay, the Chapel minister when I was a lassie! he has his ain vera bend, an' the lang lines doun the cheek that look as gin they had been made wi' a pleugh; ay! he's him owre again, an' he couldna be like a better man!'

The speaker was near the open carriage, which was being driven at a foot's pace, and the General heard all that she said; the words proved too much for him, and for a minute or two his face was hidden from every one; yet, perhaps, he had never known a more truly happy moment; now, when about to bring to completion a good work which but for the teaching, and still more for the influence, of that same Mr. Lindsay would probably never have been conceived, certainly not patiently wrought out, what greater pleasure could he have had than that of being likened to him even in mere personal likeness?

'Hepburn's Hospital' is a noble erection, built of the native sandstone; beautiful, as well as solid in design and execution, and seeming more like a palatial residence than a charitable institution; within, it is cheerful and comfortable—'a home'—as the founder desired it to be; the apartments for the aged inmates being especially full of comfort and brightness. The 'old Red House,' which at that time still stood close to the outer gates of the Institution, had been bought by the General from the eldest surviving son of Judge Hepburn, a young man just then completing his University career at Oxford, and who was now the head of the once

powerful House of Hepburn; this home of his childhood Sir Stuart had had fitted up as an infirmary ward to be used in cases of sickness; had placed it under the care of two middle-aged women, now widows, who had had experience in nursing, and whom he remembered as respectable girls, acquaintances of his boyhood. There was nothing of 'sectarianism' in the scope and aim of this charity of Sir Stuart's founding and endowing; honest and faithful in his religion as in all other matters, he adhered with heart and soul to the Church of his baptism—the grand historic Church of his fathers; but he would not have limited the benefits and privileges of his charity to those who belonged to his own communion; and careful provision had been made for supplying the religious wants alike of the Presbyterian and Episcopalian inmates of the Institution; and there was a regulation in the code of laws governing the establishment, that the spiritual education of the children should be attended to exclusively by the ministers of the congregations to which they respectively belonged; also, it was a rule that one, at least, of the masters, and one of the mistresses, should be an Episcopalian, and that it should be part of the duty of each of these to conduct the boys and girls of the Scottish Episcopal communion to the public services of their Church; but, beyond these rightful regulations, there were no especial privileges or advantages accruing to either the young or the aged who might belong to the founder's own communion. Indeed,

the benefits of the charity were not confined, even to the inhabitants of the burgh and parish of Ennerleddie, nor to the county; they were open, with due restrictions, to all of that division of Scotland commonly known as 'the Highlands,' although in the admission of inmates preference was to be given, first, to the inhabitants of Ennerleddie, secondly, to persons belonging to the county. The crowds which surged up to the very gates of the Institution, were shut out for a time, whilst the civic authorities and invited friends conducted Sir Stuart Hepburn into the large dining-hall, where, in waiting for their arrival, were the aged men and women, and the young boys and girls who had been chosen as the first recipients of the charity. Sir Stuart, whilst submitting in almost every detail of the arrangements of the day, to the wishes of the Town Council, had stipulated that he and those people for whom, and for whose successors in the Institution, he had worked and toiled for thirty years (though these were not the words he used), should eat one meal together under the same roof; and as 'a banquet,' a favourite mode of showing honour in Scotland, had been in the minds of the authorities, they had willingly consented that their hero should be allowed to have around him these poor, for whom he had provided so comfortable a home; but Stuart had scarcely realised how sumptuous an affair 'the meal' would prove, nor how comparatively distant he, in the centre of the 'upper table' opposite the gallery, occupied for the time by musicians, would

be from his humble friends. The banquet with its many courses seemed wearily long to the General, a man abstemious in eating and drinking by inclination as well as by principle; but with his unfailing courtesy, he exerted himself not only to appear pleased, but to *be* pleased, and to feel true thankfulness for the kindness done to him, for this feast had been spread by his native city in his honour, and therefore he behaved as an honoured guest ought to do, showing no signs of weariness or impatience during the slow, long-drawn progress of the pompous and highly elaborated speeches which succeeded the feeding part of the business. The Provost, the senior town councillor, the parish minister, the Bishop of the diocese, the Episcopalian clergyman of Trinity Church, Ennerleddie, Lord Cardross, and Sir James Dalgettie, each of these had his turn, and each speech seemed longer than the last, and more full of compliments to the General, who listened with some real inward amusement and surprise—he had never known before what a hero he was, nor had been quite sure how many ‘distinguished and noble services he had rendered to his country’; all this he could manage to endure well enough, being supported by amused surprise; but when it came to reminiscences of his early days, to eulogiums on his conduct to his aged grandfather, and on the filial piety out of which had sprung this magnificent gift to the poor, it seemed to him as if he could bear it no longer, and his earnestly whispered ‘Pray do not say any more or I cannot

remain here,' brought the words of the last speaker, Sir James Dalgettie, who stood by his side, to a somewhat abrupt close. And immediately after followed the ceremony of presenting the General with 'The Freedom of the City,' enclosed in an ebony casket, adorned on sides and lid with medallions in raised and chased gold; that on the lid represented a Roman centurion in full armour, kneeling at the feet of a long-robed personage who was endeavouring to raise him; around were aged and crippled men and women, and children bearing various garments and baskets piled with loaves; an angel with outspread wings, hovered over all, and round the medallion were the words in thickly-raised, and fantastically-shaped letters—

'Cornelius, the Centurion;  
A just man and one that feareth God.  
Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for  
A memorial before God.'

It was well that Sir Stuart saw and took in the meaning of this medallion before he was called upon at last to open his own mouth, and give thanks for the honours that had been paid to him; he had plenty of time to study it whilst the toast of his health was being drunk with 'Highland Honours,' and it touched so truly that part of his inner nature which he could bear to talk of—his burning love of his profession as a soldier—that it loosened his tongue and made his speech a less dryly Scotch affair than even his best friends had dared to hope it might be. To every thorough

soldier there must be something peculiarly fascinating in the history of the ancient Romans, in the daring bravery, and the admirable discipline of their legions, in the magnificent exploits and the precise obedience of many of their individual warriors; and Stuart, who was a soldier to his heart's core, could appreciate the compliment which had been rendered to him in likening him to a Roman centurion, and one of the Bible heroes! Memory took him back long years to the Sunday evening when he, a child of eight, had asked his grandfather if there were any stories in the Bible about good soldiers; and when his grandfather had brought out the great old Bible and shown him the pictures of Cornelius praying and of the coming of S. Peter into his house, whilst telling him the tale which ever after he had loved to spell out for himself until he knew it by heart. So vividly present to his mind was this scene that it carried him out of himself sufficiently to forget shyness and reserve; to forget that he was a hero, 'being fêted by an admiring town,' and to think only of this incident of his childhood, which he related with the same truthful simplicity with which it was presenting itself to his own mind. It made his speech no cut-and-dried thing, but a real bit taken out of his heart's feelings, and given spontaneously to the people who had been kind to him, and,—as none can better appreciate the heart's free giving forth than the Scotch, who know full well the difficulties of such giving,—his genuine words were met with genuine

sympathy—with that touched, eager emotion, full of springing gladness and yet quivering with an exquisite pain which none but Scotchmen and Scotchwomen have ever experienced or can thoroughly understand, but which is discoverable in our national music and national poetry, much of which is, outwardly, all ringing gladness and buoyant mirth, but with under-chords of exquisitely pathetic tenderness. Several of the speakers had alluded to the fact of this day being the birthday of the founder of the noble charity. Stuart knew that it was also the anniversary of the day on which he had made his vow to be the ‘helper of the poor and suffering.’ *That* fact he could not tell his audience, but in thanking the friend who had said that henceforth his birthday would be a marked and memorable day in Ennerleddie, he owned that it gave him pleasure to feel that by the results of the work commenced thereon it might prove one to be long happily remembered.

Eighteen years later, when Sir Stuart, in common with all manly men, was roused to an enthusiastic loyalty, as tender as it was reverent, for the girl-Queen of Great Britain, he rejoiced in the fact that on the day of the opening of his hospital that loved and honoured Sovereign had first drawn breath.

The banquet over, the company proceeded to inspect the building, and Stuart had the happiness of seeing the people who were the first to taste of the fruit of his labour installed in their various apartments, and of having a few words of talk, and



of exchanging hearty handshakes with each. All were gathered again into the common hall, a vast room, comfortably fitted with benches, arm-chairs, tables, and well-filled bookcases. There was sung, in the quaint Scotch metrical version to an equally quaint Scotch tune, the first part of the thirty-fourth psalm, after which the parish minister gave a short and suitable address, founded on the words, 'I will pay my vows now in the sight of all His people;' and then, by the considerate kindness of the arrangers of the day's ceremonies, the Bishop of the diocese was asked to pray, and by his prayer and solemn benediction,—which to Sir Stuart was the official sanction he had earnestly desired,—brought to a close the proceedings of a ceremony long to be remembered in Ennerleddie.

Before returning to Cardross Castle, Stuart procured the opportunity for which he had been yearning, of going alone to the Cathedral ruins and to the Chapter-house, where on that day thirty-four years before he had made his solemn vow; now, as he once again knelt there, at some ancient canon's stall, this time in the beauteous gloaming of a Scotch May day, he could see through the archway, where once a door had been, the fulfilment of that vow, its visible outcome in the stately building which stretched its fair length and height between him and the horizon where there lingered the gleaming yellow lights of evening, flushed with a tender hue of pink, making a sort of natural halo above the darker coloured edifice. As he gazed on

the completed work and its crowning glory of heaven's own lighting, the long years of his youth and middle age seemed to be narrowed into a very small space; their troubles and perplexities, their difficulties and disappointments, seemed to melt away in the pure, calm light dawning upon the beginning of old age. The day—the May day—which had been so long, so radiant, and so beautiful, was no longer young; he himself was no longer young, but both to the day and to himself had come the fulfilment of the olden promise—

‘At evening-time it shall be light.’

## CHAPTER XII.

SIR STUART HEPBURN spent that summer in Scotland, learning to know his country as thoroughly as the still inefficient arrangements for travelling and the bad state of the roads would admit; although indeed this latter disadvantage he did not allow to be a serious obstacle, for where he could not drive he rode, and where it was impossible even to ride he walked. He lingered on as long as he could venture to remain, for he yearned to live in his native land; and the long drawn-out beauty and brightness of the autumn days—that brave, almost gladsome dying of the aged year which is such a marked characteristic of the Scottish climate—tempted him into staying on yet another and another week, until at last, in the middle of November, a seriously severe cold, which kept him for several days a close prisoner to one room, compelled him to take flight across the border, and to hasten as quickly as in those days he could hasten, down to Exmouth, where on his first arrival from India he had taken a house. His faithful native servant (for many years one of his soldiers, and who had nursed him during all his illnesses) rejoiced greatly at turning his face southward, not only because he

was thereby relieved of some portion of his constant anxiety concerning his beloved master's health, but also on his own account, for even in Devonshire the winters were miserable seasons to the poor creature, who passed most of them shivering over the fire, or crouching in a little hothouse which was full of tropical plants, and only moved out to follow his master on horseback (or when the roads were lonely, to ride beside him), for he would not trust that charge to any other than himself. It would almost have broken his heart to see any one else attend the General when he rode out upon the splendid and perfectly-groomed Arabian, which had been presented to him by his brother officers a year before he left India, and which he had brought home to England at the cost of some considerable trouble and expense. The General and 'Duke' and David (for at his baptism that was the name which the converted native had chosen for himself) were now well-known sights in Exmouth and the neighbourhood, and sights which the townspeople would not willingly have dispensed with, for they took an innocent pride in having amongst them a military hero, and a veritable Hindoo, copper-coloured enough, half to frighten, half to delight the small children, and a pure-blood Arabian, whose beauty of form even the unlearned in horse-flesh could see and admire. The General, too, was so liberal in giving to the local charities, so regular in his attendance at public worship, that the clergymen rejoiced over him; and he gave such delightful entertainments at

his house, which had a delicious foreign air in its arrangements, and he was so generous in giving away his loveliest flowers, that all the young people liked him; indeed there was many a pretty girl who openly said that she 'loved the dear General, that she doted upon him,' he being exactly the kind of man of whom a young lady could say such a thing, for the ideas of love and courtship in the ordinary sense of the word never connected themselves with him, even in the minds of match-making mothers, for with all his thorough kindness of manner, and liberal, spontaneous giving out of his own best self to his more intimate associates, there yet seemed to be drawn around him an atmosphere within which none but himself could enter; and the youngest and most light-hearted girl who said she 'loved and doted upon him,' ever treated him with that sweetest and loveliest of all human affections—a tender daughterly respect, which had in it no shade of coquetry or desire of winning from its object mere personal notice or admiration, yet nevertheless every woman, of whatever age, liked, when meeting the General, to feel sure that even her apparel was neat and tasteful, his own scrupulous nicety of dress and delicate personal refinement being like an aroma, felt rather than seen; and no woman, even of the lowest degree, willingly spoke coarsely or looked boldly in his presence, for his chivalrous courtesy towards all women, shown as much to the humblest servant-maid as to the greatest lady, raised their own sense of self-respect, and made them anxious

to retain that elevation upon which they wonderingly but most certainly felt he had placed them.

Sir Stuart Hepburn was at this time of his life a happy man, although undoubtedly he was a somewhat lonely one, and seemed withdrawn from close, engrossing human ties and personal interests; he had no relations near him; indeed, he had not any near ones anywhere. His step-sister, over whom he had by letters, and by means of friends, constantly kept watch, had married an officer, and was now with her husband in India; besides, she had never known of her relationship to Stuart, so, though she felt much gratitude towards him as a faithful guardian and fatherly friend with whom she diligently and affectionately corresponded, he had never received from her that warm love which she probably would have given had she been aware that he was her step-brother, her own father's son.

Judge Hepburn and his wife were both dead, and their only surviving son, although he occasionally wrote a formal but kindly letter to the General as to an old friend of his parents, and as a distinguished hero, whose kinsmanship with himself he was proud to acknowledge, never mentioned Lady Ericson, not in the least from any intention of avoiding her name, but simply with youthful ignorance as to his correspondent having any possible interest in her, or her affairs. Yet Sir Stuart did often long to hear something respecting this, the one lady-love of his life; the fact of her being a widow he knew from the public journals, but that

was all: how she bore her widowhood, or even where she now resided, were secrets which he could find no means of fathoming; so he certainly was a lonely man as regards nearest and dearest interests, but, as we have said before, not an unhappy one. He was not what was even then thought a wealthy man; was scarcely more than what, in these days of increased expenditure and lowered value of money, would be considered as being 'comfortably off;' the building and endowing of his hospital, and munificent gifts to the mission in India, which he had had the happiness of seeing fairly started under the auspices of the first Bishop of Calcutta, before he left that country, had swallowed up much of the large capital which, aided by his father's bequest, he had gathered together, and he had reserved for himself only what was sufficient to give him an income of fifteen hundred a year; but he considered himself wealthy, and certainly enjoyed many comforts and some luxuries, making as well as taking pleasures for himself. He studied much, saying with humility that in his boyhood and early manhood he had had neither time nor opportunity for the study of anything except languages. He diligently and laboriously read scientific works, caring for none except those on Botany, for which he had a genuine liking; but he read History with avidity, and threw himself delightedly into the study of the dead languages, rejoicing in being able to find in himself an increasing power of comprehending the *Iliad* in its own

glorious original; the true soldier loved this history of heroes, although he cared for it more as a history than as a poem, and did not like to believe that there was more fiction than truth in those vivid descriptions of heroic deeds which made his heart, and even his face, glow as he read; and besides all these, he had the 'Waverley Novels;' every volume as it came out was added to his much-prized store, and read with avidity; indeed, *what* those novels and also Scott's poems were to him it would be difficult to state. How could he, patriotic with the righteous patriotism every good man has, do other than love those vividly faithful descriptions of his country and his country's people—the productions of a Scottish heart and brain? and how could he, an ardent soldier, fail to appreciate the soldierly deeds so appreciatively told, whilst the high morality, delicate purity, and evident, though unobtruded Christianity of the author, touched his deepest emotions? When he first read *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, he felt, so he afterwards said, as he had felt on first hearing 'Auld-Lang-Syne,' sung by Marjorie Hepburn in the drawing-room at 'The Aloes.' He did more than buy these works for himself; he gave copies to those of his young friends who could not, as he thought, afford to buy them for themselves, and a set of each was placed without delay in the library of his Hospital. He was wont to say, half jestingly, but with much of real truth, that there was no man whom he so envied as 'the Great Unknown.'



The General enjoyed his garden, although the want of his right arm prevented him from working much in it. He joined in many of the social amusements of the place, and liked doing so; but he liked still more gathering groups of children, rich and poor, on his lawns, setting them to play games there and in the maze of the shrubberies, and loading them on their return home with gifts of fruit and flowers. His rides were pleasant to him, especially that to Exeter, to which city he went three or four times a week, for neither he, nor David, nor Duke, thought anything of a ten-mile ride; but it was his custom to go into the city early in the day and leave it in the afternoon, both that the horses might have good rest, and that he and his man might attend the service at the cathedral, a building which had an especial charm and fascination for them; the great size and the duskiness delighting the Hindoo (although he did shiver at its chill air), the old associations and the music charming the General, who, after his long dearth of religious privileges, was naturally deeply impressed by worship which had many outward accessories of beauty and grandeur; yet he also greatly enjoyed the simple service at the little old country church of Littleham, whither he used frequently to walk on a fine Sunday, starting early, so that he might linger in the lanes, Devonshire lanes,—unequalled in their shadowed loveliness, save, perhaps, by those ‘devious, leafy’ windings which intersect nearly the whole of Jersey,—one of the fairest gems in that fair, jewelled chap-

let called by their nearest neighbours 'Les Iles de la Manche.'

Sir Stuart might enjoy filling his hothouse and conservatory with the gorgeous floral treasures of the Eastern world; might like to feast his eyes on the marvellous scarlet of cactus blossoms, to refresh them with the paler rose flush of the oleander, and to let them linger on the creamy whiteness of the Nile lily; but he had a deeper love for the pale yellow primroses, the silvered daisies, the blue-eyed 'speedwells,' the clinging caressing bindweed, the pink dog-roses, and the fragrant honeysuckle, which each in its own turn, or together, make our British lanes and fields so lovely, and so loved, that in the grandest scenery of foreign lands, the British heart has ever a yearning thought of 'home.'

One morning, early in the May following the opening of Hepburn's Hospital, the General was taking a solitary walk on the sands; there were few persons abroad, for the day was yet young, and the General wandered farther and farther, enticed onwards alike by the beauty of the weather and the solitude which was so enwrapt with a happy calm as to be free from that chill awesome 'feel' that is apt to pervade what we call loneliness. There are some happy souls, though, who are enabled always to realise that there is no such thing as loneliness in the sense of isolated existence, and for whom the wildest hillside and the densest forest are peopled by the visible beings of the lower creation, and by the invisible denizens of the spiritual world. As Sir

Stuart Hepburn was certainly one of those persons, he enjoyed his lingering stroll along the smooth sanded beach, and extended it towards the less frequented part, where rocks, red at their base, green and brown weed-covered at their top, piled themselves together, or broke away into fantastic shapes, making, in the spaces and hollows, pools and miniature lakes more or less deep, to serve as homes for millions of beauteous zoophytes, and the smaller tribes of shell-fish.

At that time the scientific world knew comparatively little of the nature or habits of zoophytes, and Sir Stuart might be said to know nothing; for as he looked down meditatively and admiringly into the sun-loved, translucent pools, he mentally classed all that he saw there, save some swift-flitting shrimp, or clumsily-scuttling crab, as 'bonnie red and green weeds, almost as bonnie as flowers, after all.'

Whilst he was gazing into one of these fairy baths, a slight, half-suppressed cry of distress caught his quick ear, and hastily looking up, he perceived, a few paces off, a little girl in an almost prostrate position between two of the highest and sharpest rocks. In an instant he was beside her, and found that her foot had been caught by some thick trailing seaweed, and that she was unable from her hemmed-in position to stoop down and take it off. Her little hands were scratched by the rough, mussel-encrusted sides of the rock, to which she was forced to cling for support. One leg was sorely cramped and stiffened, and she was altogether in what any little

maiden of eleven summers might well be excused for thinking a deplorable situation; and sixty years ago, little girls were not so brave or so clever about climbing, or any athletic exercises, as they are now-a-days. This little girl whom Sir Stuart Hepburn found cramped up between the rocks that fine May morning had tears in her eyes, and not only there, but also on her cheeks,—great drops blurring their pretty pinkness,—and touching the General's kind heart; he spoke reassuringly, and extricated the small, distressed damsel as quickly as his left-handedness would allow. He drew her to a large, flat rock, and finding that she still trembled, begged her to sit down whilst he fetched her white calico sun-bonnet, which had fallen off and now lay, like a snow-flake, in one of the little pools, unfortunately rather a deep one, so it was much wetted, although the thick material of which it was made and the close 'casing' had kept it from sinking.

'I think we must put this head-gear in the sun to get dried,' said Sir Stuart, as he returned with it to the little girl; 'only had you not better put your scarf or a handkerchief over your head lest you should take cold?'

'Thank you, sir; I do not think that I shall take cold—I never do, and I am used to being without my bonnet when out of doors.'

The General perceived by the little girl's appearance and manners that she was a lady, and though he was rather surprised at finding such a child all alone and unattended, he did not ask any questions;

he was not given to asking questions of strangers, or indeed of any one, although, as no man could be a more ready and earnestly attentive listener to any volunteered information, he was constantly in the habit of receiving confidences from all sorts of persons. He now proceeded to point out a comfortable seat to his young companion, and when she had arranged herself sat down beside her, as he did so, drawing from his pocket a compact, leather-covered, tin-lined case, in which, on being opened, were discovered a few plain biscuits, a couple of dried figs, and a large bunch of raisins,—all these he placed in the little girl's lap, saying, 'There, eat those, if you please, my dear; they will do you good after your fright and your tumble.'

'Thank you, sir; you are very kind,' replied the little girl; and forthwith she began munching with looks of great content. In a minute, however, she stopped, and after snipping off a small bunch from the thick cluster of raisins, she held it up with one of the biscuits, and said, with a pretty mixture of frank kindliness and childish shyness—

'Please, sir, won't you take some too?'

Sir Stuart instantly accepted the offer with as much courteous gratitude as though it had not been his own property he was accepting, saying, playfully—

'I dare say you are wondering how it is that I carry about food in my pocket; but yesterday I was out on rather a long walk, far up into the country, looking for flowers, or rather plants, as

botanical specimens, and I took this little case filled with eatables lest I should be hungry before I got home again to my dinner.'

'Oh, that was nice! I think it is so pleasant to eat out of doors.'

'Well, so do I, because I often did it when I was a boy; it is nice when one has plenty of time to eat leisurely, but not when one is in a hurry, and has to snatch a meal on horseback, perhaps, or in a tent, just when all the other tents around you are being taken down, and all the soldiers and other people about are ready to start off on a long march.'

The little girl's bright eyes, full of wonder, were fixed on the General.

'Have you had to do those things?' she asked, with a child's ready and sometimes charming inquisitiveness.

'Yes, indeed I have, often,' replied Sir Stuart, smiling back at his little questioner.

'Then you must have been a soldier—an officer, I mean.'

'Nay, my dear, you were quite right the first time. It was a soldier that I was, although I held the rank of an office-bearer, and did official work.'

'And you have been in India too, as you said you had been in tents.'

'How do you come to know about that, my little lassie?' asked Sir Stuart, much amused and interested.

'Oh! because mamma has told me; she lived in India a long while, and she was born there too.'

‘I dare say she has told you stories about that country then,—about the dark-looking people, and the tall palm-trees, and the funny banyan trees and the ugly idols in the great beautiful temples?’

‘Yes; she often tells us stories. She used to tell us a great many more, but that was when she was well; she hasn’t been well now for a long time; that is why we came here to this pretty place. We lived in London for a long time; but when Philip was taken away to Eton, mamma was so unhappy that she grew ill, and the doctors made her come here.’

‘Then you are living in Exmouth?’ said the General, beginning to ask questions, for he felt interested, strangely so, as he thought, in this little waif that had dropped so suddenly into his path.

‘Yes, for a month or two. We have lodgings over there—a long way off.’

‘But, my dear bairn, how came you here by yourself?—such a long way for a little girl to come alone.’

The child did not answer for a minute; her large grey eyes were fixed wonderingly upon the General, and presently she said, quite forgetting the good manners which she had evidently been carefully taught—

‘Please, why did you call me a bairn? Only Scotch people do that.’

‘Well, my dear, I *am* a Scotchman. Don’t you like Scotch people?’

‘Oh yes, indeed I do! Mamma is Scotch,

although she was born in India ; and often and often she speaks such pretty, funny words which she says are Scotch ; and she says that there is no country in the world so beautiful—no, so bonnie, is what she calls it—as Scotland.’

‘ And, my dear, she is right. I have wandered in many foreign lands, and I have seen a good part of England ; but, nice as England is, it isn’t—why, it isn’t Scotland.’ And then the General checked himself, and smiled at the patriotism which led him to speak so enthusiastically to a young child. She replied—

‘ I have two Scotch names, and they are very pretty. Two of them are mamma’s as well.’

‘ Are they ? May I hear them, my dear ? ’

‘ Marjorie Hepburn Ericson,’ replied the little girl, as she complacently munched her last raisin.

In moments of glad or sorrowful surprise, people can scarcely realise how they feel, and Stuart could never afterwards have told what his feelings were at that instant, if indeed he had any ; sea and sky seemed blotted out ; everything past and present was, as it were, swallowed up in that one great swelling throb of glad thankfulness. Many sad and painful surprises had come to him during his life, but he had had few that were pleasant or joyous, certainly not one so joyous as this,—the knowledge that his act of kindness and helpfulness had been unconsciously bestowed upon the child of his nearest and dearest friend, of her who had ever been his one ideal of what a woman should be, and



for whose sake he had loved and revered all women. His nature was so thoroughly unselfish that his first thought really was that of thankfulness that he had been enabled to render a service to his dear old friend by serving her child; but the thoughts that followed each other in quick succession were more connected with himself—the joy of knowing that Marjorie was near, in the very town in which he lived, that he should soon see her,—was a joy almost too great to be borne. It was only the long-ago acquired, and now habitual self-control, that prevented him from getting up and rushing away into the solitude for which he longed—even this one little girl was a companion too many; nevertheless, he sat quite still, his head slightly raised, and his eyes gazing intently seaward, seeing far beyond that sea line—(an almost invisible line, so alike in soft pearly blue were both sea and sky), away into the long vista of years that had come and gone since first he saw Marjorie Hepburn a younger child, then, than the little maiden who sat wondering at the long silence, and, truth to tell, rather alarmed both by it and the fixed gaze. At last she ventured gently, very gently, to put her hand on his knee and found that timid little touch quite enough to make her new old friend once again her kind attentive listener. He caught the small and rather brown, but thorough Hepburn hand in his, and pressing it warmly, said—

‘My dear, dear bairn, forgive me for forgetting you a while; you gave me such wonderful and good

news I couldn't think of anything else. Your mother is an old friend of mine; I knew her first when she was a wee lassie younger than you—a bit bairnie of six years old.'

The younger Marjorie gazed at Sir Stuart up and down reflectively; then, a bonnie smile breaking over her face, she said—

'And did you first see her cuddled up in a window-seat in an old house in Edinburgh? and had she on a pink satin frock that stuck out over a hoop?'

'Ay, bairn, just that. Has she told you about that—and do you know who I am?'

'Yes; she has told us that story many and many a time—Ralph, and Philip, and me; and I know who you are. You are a General, and a great hero, and Sir Stuart Hepburn; but mamma used to call you Stuart in those days long ago; and sometimes she does now, though when she does we laugh at her for forgetting that she isn't a little girl now; and she laughs too.'

Sir Stuart did not laugh, but he smiled, and the sallow cheeks were flushed with a glow, not due only to the stooping down to pick up a pebble from the ground, whilst his answer came with a pleased tone, a light-hearted ring under the quiet words,

'It is good of your mother to remember me; but I wish to hear a great deal more about her. Did you say that she is not well?'

'No; she has not been well for a good while now, ever since Philip went to Eton.'

‘How is that? Boys always do go to school. I did not know that their going ever made their mothers ill.’

‘Oh! but Phil is such a *little* boy—only seven years old, and he is not strong; but papa left orders—put it into his will or something—that he was to be taken away from mamma as soon as he was seven, and he and Ralph are not to live with us any more until they are quite grown up; and I am to go away when I am fourteen, and not come back until I am eighteen. I heard nurse and Mrs. Barker say that it was a great shame; but when I told mamma so, she was quite angry with me; and she said that I was naughty, and that papa must have thought he had good reasons for such wishes; so of course he must have had, if mamma says so; and yet she cries sometimes, such a great lot of crying, that it makes me sad, and nurse says it’s bad for her.’

Here Marjorie broke off with a sigh—rather a piteous one, and one which showed that the child had early learnt something of what trouble and anxiety meant. She looked up at the General, whose mouth was firmly shut, and whose eyes were drawn together by a little frown not often seen on that large open brow. He answered the child’s look by taking her hand again in his, and saying—

‘I hope you try and comfort your dear mamma when she is sorrowful.’

‘Yes, I do try. She has had a great many troubles, but perhaps she would not like me to

tell them; besides, I don't think I know them all, for nurse often says, "Get along, Miss May, you don't know half the things that's a-vexing your poor dear mamma, *you* don't." That's the way nurse talks.'

Sir Stuart could not help smiling at what was evidently clever imitation; but how sorely he was longing to be beside the elder Marjorie, trying his powers of comforting, no one but himself could ever have told.

'Tell me,' he presently said, 'where is your nurse? You surely were not allowed to come here alone.'

'No; you know that lane up there,' and the child pointed with her hand in the direction farthest from the town, 'that lane which leads down here? Nurse has a sister living in a cottage in that road, quite close here, and we came this morning to visit her, but when we got there we found she was ill, though she was well a week ago; so nurse made me come down here, and promised to stay with her until the doctor and a nurse should come; and there, look! that's nurse coming now. See, she's making signs, and I think I hear her call. I'll wave my bonnet to her, and go and meet her.'

'I will go with you. And will you ask your mamma if I may come and see her to-morrow—if an old friend may come?'

'Yes; but I must not tell her all in a hurry, for she gets frightened rather quickly; and nurse says she *must not* be startled *no* how.'

'That's a good, careful lassie! We will ask nurse if I may take you both to my house, and she can wait whilst I write a note to your mamma, and gather some flowers for you to take her.'

'That *will* be nice! But can you write letters with only—' and here Marjorie stopped suddenly, colouring at what she feared had been a rude speech; but the General smiled reassuringly as he said—

'With only one hand, and that the left one! My dear, I lost the right arm long ago, and I have had plenty of practice in left-handed writing since then, so it has become easy to me.'

By this time the two were close to the nurse, who had been fussing and fretting herself as to 'who it could possibly be that Miss May had fallen in with;' but the moment she had drawn near enough to see the General clearly, she felt satisfied that 'at least it was a gentleman, and an *old* gentleman too.' She made elaborate curtsies and apologies, and the General saw at a glance that she was really a valuable, trustworthy woman, who, perplexed by unexpected circumstances, had scarcely been able to avoid a temporary desertion of her nursling, and who had really believed that no danger could happen to the child 'on that there safe, shut-in beach, with the tide down ever so low too, and no men-folk, nor no one about.'

'Now, Miss May, my dear, didn't I beg of you not to be thoughtless, and not to go getting yourself into no mischief; and didn't you promise me

you wouldn't!' she exclaimed reproachfully, as soon as she had been told of the little accident.

'Yes, nursie, I did, and of course I didn't mean to fall—that was the seaweed's fault, not mine; and I was not hurt a bit. I am quite all right now—see! and my sun-bonnet is quite dry too.'

'Well; I am sure you have need to be thankful to this kind gentleman; and don't you go for to frighten your mamma about you. My lady isn't well, sir,' added the nurse, turning to the General, 'and it don't do for her to be started sudden like, or put about any way.'

'So Miss May has been telling me, and I think she seems considerate about her mother. Lady Ericson is an old friend of mine, and I wish to write her a note; so I will, if you please, take you and Miss Marjorie into my house for a few minutes.'

The nurse looked somewhat doubtful, and Sir Stuart hastened to explain who he was and where he lived; whereupon her curtseys became more elaborate than ever, and the General, when they reached his house, commended this English nurse to the especial care of his Scotch housekeeper, whilst, taking the little girl by the hand, he led her into his own study, a delightful large room, with three French windows leading to the beautiful terrace garden, just now one blaze of tulips and other spring flowers. Marjorie, however, after one look out of the window, had her attention fully engrossed by a chiffonière and cabinet laden with Indian figures, wondrously carved chessmen, sandal-

wood boxes, and ivory puzzles. Like a well-trained child, she looked, but did not touch, and the General, satisfied that she was happy, sat down to write his note. Sincere and kindly, simple and to the point, as all his written and spoken words were, it ran thus:—

‘MY DEAR LADY ERICSON,

‘Your little girl will have told you how strangely and, for me, how very happily we have made each other’s acquaintance. I grieve to hear from her that you are ill, but not so ill, I hope, as to be obliged to deny me the great pleasure of calling on you to-morrow, or at any other time that may suit you better. I do, indeed, weary to see you once again, after the many years that have passed since we last met.

‘Believe me,

‘Yours very faithfully,

‘STUART HEPBURN.’

This little note written, neatly folded, and fastened with a small green wafer, according to the fashion of the time, the General asked Marjorie to go with him into the conservatory, where he began gathering together a bouquet of flowers, selected with much care and thought; they were not many, but they were choice, and when they had been gathered, were committed to David, to fashion into a rounded, compact mass of well-harmonised and subtly-blended tints, Marjorie watching with curious interest the long, lissome, dusky fingers wandering in and out amongst the delicately-hued and the purely white blossoms, like lines of shadow creeping and straying across new-fallen snow-wreaths.

Quickly the little girl's feet sped homewards, outstripping her elderly nurse's, for she longed to tell her mother all her wonderful adventures; yet, once on the threshold, she slackened and steadied her eager tread, left the flowers and the note in the hall, and tried to quiet down the dance in her eyes before she went into the parlour, and up to the easy-chair where her mother sat, looking out at the sea, her stocking-knitting requiring only an occasional glance, and leaving both eyes and thoughts free to wander where they could and would.



## CHAPTER XIII.


THE room into which Marjorie entered was small and low, with the pretentious poverty of second-rate lodging-houses in general; the smallness and the tawdry discomfort had never struck the child so greatly as they did now that she had just come from Sir Stuart Hepburn's large airy rooms, thoroughly comfortable in all their arrangements, and filled, not crowded, with curious and beautiful objects of nature and art; but the lady in the arm-chair, to whose side she went with loving eagerness, had nothing pretentious or tawdry in her appearance. It would be unwise to describe her dress, for we are all aware that dress was never more tasteless or comfortless than it was at that particular era; and Lady Ericson, of course, could not attire herself differently from other people, if indeed she had any desire to do so, which may fairly be doubted, for probably her eye had grown so accustomed to the prevalent mode of dressing that she saw in it nothing ugly or unsuitable. She wore black; some heavy material that clung tightly about her tall thin figure. But much of the gloom and of the ugliness of the make was hidden by the Indian cashmere

scarf shawl of brilliant crimson, richly embroidered in white silk, which she wore over her shoulders, and had fastened at her throat with a brooch the miniature of her late grandfather, the exiled and prescribed Jacobite, Lord Hepburn, who had now been dead more than seventy years, but whose pictured face smiled as brightly as ever from out its pearl setting, and was so wonderfully like the living face above it, that the veriest stranger could not have looked on the one and on the other, and not have known that the pictured man and the living lady must have been nearly related the one to the other.

Such a cap as was then in use amongst widowed ladies was not worn by Lady Ericson ; she had laid that aside more than a year before, as also all crape trimming. But she wore some sort of white muslin cap adorned with lace and lavender ribbons, a cap modelled upon that which she remembered her grandmother to have worn, and which was certainly not unbecoming, for it did not hide the perfect oval contour of face, nor the hair which nature (now that fashion would no longer have done it) had powdered with soft, silvery whiteness, forming a delightful and artistic contrast to the well-defined and arched eyebrows, and heavy eye-lashes, so black indeed as to cast a dark shadow, often mistaken for their own natural hue, over the violet eyes below them. Although this face preserved so many of its youthful beauties, it had that chastened, stilled look which no very young face can show, the heart

in early youth not having been subjected to the influences which can alone create those looks—the influences of much sorrow and care; of experience of the good and of the evil things of human life; and of severe outward and inward discipline received in a submissive, loving, and all-trusting spirit. All these influences had been at work upon Lady Ericson's heart and life for many years, and although the furnace-heat had sorely tried her bodily strength, crushing out much of her physical energy and dimming her natural cheerfulness of thought and manner, they had really strengthened her inner nature; and, whilst strengthening, had purified, refined, and exalted it into what her friends might well be excused for believing the perfection of womanly virtue and Christian excellence. Her youth had not justified the promise of her childhood; it seemed as if during the early years of her womanhood her real nature had lain dormant beneath a mask that was commonplace enough. But with the passing away of her first youth, and the entrance into mature womanhood, the rare promises of her childhood had been verified; and under the pressure of sorrow and discipline she had risen to the full heights of that noble goodness and almost heroic excellence to which one of her race (that had for long ages been a name in the land for all noble and heroic qualities) might justly have been expected to attain. Her trials had been such as too often embitter rather than purify: distrust, suspicion, and systematic unkindness from

the one who should have been her natural protector and best friend, were trials heavy to be borne. But after the first shocked surprise and youthful uncertainty as to what her own conduct ought to be, she bore them nobly and bravely, concealing, as far as possible, from the world, that they even existed, and never complaining to those persons who knew of them only too well. Distrust and dislike of his wife had, at last grown into a perfect mania with Sir Ralph Ericson; and indeed, Marjorie consoled herself somewhat by the belief that he was mentally deranged upon this matter, although the world in general considered him sane enough, and a remarkably shrewd man of business, a capable magistrate and skilled politician; but those who after his death heard the terms of his will were as much shocked, though not as sorely wounded by them, as was his inoffensive widow. He had left her nothing beyond what he had settled upon her at the time of their marriage; and, with still greater unkindness, desired that her boys should not remain with her after they were seven years old. At the time of his father's death Ralph, the elder son, was nearly twelve, and had been for more than a year at school; Philip, the younger, was only four; and so, for three years after her husband's death, poor Lady Ericson had lived with the shadow of separation from her delicate, feeble youngest continually drawing nearer and nearer. The sum of money which her husband settled on her at her marriage had not been



considerable, for he had been then but a younger son; and about a year before her coming to Exmouth she had lost nearly the whole of her own fortune, inherited from her father, in the breaking of an Indian bank; and she was now, for a woman of her rank and habits, really poor, and compelled to exercise strict and somewhat painful economy. Her father after the death of his mother, the Lady Marjorie Hepburn, had sold 'Gowanbraes' and 'The Dens' to his brother the Judge, thinking that a landed estate might be more trouble than comfort to his only daughter; and the money paid for them had formed the chief part of her fair fortune, nearly the whole of which was now lost to her, as we have already said. She had not been trained to manage well, or to contrive wonders upon small means, as her grandmother had been, and it was as much as she could do merely to avoid serious debt, although she was as self-denying as it was possible for one in her weak health to be, much more so than her kindly-hearted, faithful maid, who had been the children's nurse, approved of her being.

Lady Ericson looked away from the window directly her daughter entered the room, and with one of the smiles in which there was always a happy mixture of brightness and sweetness, she said—

'You have been rather a long time, May. I suppose nurse couldn't leave off gossiping with her sister when once she had begun?'

'No, mamma, it wasn't that. Her poor sister

is ill, very ill, and nurse didn't know what to do between her and me; because there was no doctor or any one to take care of her; so she settled to stay until somebody should come, and she sent me down to the beach to play.'

'What is the matter with poor Mrs. Finch?'

'I don't know quite; some sort of fit, I think; but she was better, nurse said, before we came away.'

'Ah! I am glad of that; but we must try and spare nurse to be with her all day to-morrow. And how did you like being on the beach? What did you do to amuse yourself?'

'I picked up shells and sea-weed, and part of the time I made a sand-castle, like Ralph used to make at Weymouth—do you remember? But then after a while I went up amongst the rocks, and, do you know, I very nearly had a bad tumble; and some weed was twisted round my leg, and I didn't know what to do.'

'Poor wee wifie! and how did you manage then?'

'Oh, mamma! it was *so* nice! quite like a story-book. Such a nice, tall, old gentleman came and helped me, and was so good to me!'

'An old gentleman! How kind of him! I hope you thanked him properly.'

'Yes, I think so. And then, oh, mamma! only think what he did; he made me sit down on a rock, and he dried my bonnet in the sun, for it had fallen into a pool and got quite wet; and he

gave me biscuits and raisins out of a funny-shaped box lined with tin.'

'Why, you have had quite an adventure, little woman!' laughed Lady Ericson. 'Was he a clergyman, this particularly nice, kind old gentleman?'

'Oh, no; he has been a soldier.'

'How do you know that?'

'Because he told me so. He has been a long long time in India, and he lost his arm out there in a fight; and he is very tall and very like that picture of Mr. Lindsay which you are so fond of, and which your godmother gave you.'

Lady Ericson's pale face grew a shade paler, and she tried to raise herself in her chair with an eager, nervous motion that her little girl seemed to understand perfectly well, for she began stroking and patting her in a soothing, caressing way, saying—

'Now, don't you get frightened, mammie dear, and wonder who it was, for it was just Sir Stuart Hepburn, who used to be *the* Stuart, you know, of whom you would tell us stories; and he's coming to see you; and he's sent you a note, and oh! such lovely flowers, which his black servant made up so cleverly; at least, he isn't black, but only very brown.'

'A note, and flowers to me! And where are they, May?' said Lady Ericson, with a little gasp as if for breath.

'In the other room, mamma. I will bring them in one minute, if you will only be quite quiet and good, and not put yourself into no fuss, as nurse

always says to you. There! now lean back in your chair, and be only very glad to think that you will see him, for he *is* such a nice, dear old gentleman, and you needn't be one bit afraid of him; I am not.'

'I am quite quiet now, May. Bring me my things; quick, dear!'

Marjorie did not think that her mother was quiet enough, and she shook her thoughtful little head as she went to fetch the note and the flowers, which Lady Ericson seized eagerly; but the next instant she laid the nosegay down in her lap, and held the note in her hand, looking at it as if she did not dare to open it. Marjorie was certainly 'a wise-like bairn'; she went away, and stood in front of the chiffonière, examining a small oil-painting, cabinet-sized and massively framed, the likeness of Mr. Lindsay, and thus allowed her mother to read her note unobserved and in peace. The few kindly simple sentences brought peace along with them; they vividly recalled the writer to Lady Ericson's mind, and she felt already somewhat of the comfort and sense of supporting strength that she knew well his presence would afford. Before long she was able to call her little daughter, read the note to her, admire the flowers, and ask numerous questions about Sir Stuart's appearance, his health, and his house, finding Marjorie willing enough to tell all she knew. Mother and daughter agreed that there could not have been a more delightful adventure than this one of Marjorie's, and that it would indeed be a great happiness to have



Sir Stuart Hepburn for their friend during the time of their stay in Exmouth. And when all this had been said many times over, Lady Ericson wrote her answering note—a very short one, but long enough to gladden the General's heart; for it gave him full and hearty permission to call early in the afternoon of the next day. How often he read that note, and how delightedly he looked forward to the promised meeting, no human being besides himself ever knew; but his joy was somewhat damped by discovering in how comparatively poor and out-of-the-way quarter of the town, and in what a second-rate and probably comfortless lodging in that town she—Lady Ericson—had taken up her abode.

Happening to meet one of the physicians of the town whilst out walking that same afternoon, he turned to accompany him a little way, for it had just occurred to him that Dr. Madely might perhaps be attending Lady Ericson, and that he could contrive to learn from him of anything that might be good and desirable for her health and comfort, and which she could not seemingly procure for herself. His conjecture proved to be right; Dr. Madely had been attending her ever since her arrival, and he did not fail to express himself surprised that a person of her rank should be so poor, as he supposed she must be, from her being content with such a lodging, and from her gentle turning aside from his suggestions of daily drives and other little pleasant luxuries.

The General listened attentively, and then made

his plans accordingly, wiling away that evening and the next morning in making various arrangements which had but one end and object, that of promoting Lady Ericson's comfort, without, if possible, running any risk of burdening her with a sense of obligation.

Little Marjorie thought a great deal about the coming meeting, and expected a wonderful and exciting scene; for, with the ready intuition of an exceptionally clever and observant child, she had divined that her mother had a deep, reverent affection for Sir Stuart Hepburn, and that Sir Stuart had a deep and tender feeling of friendship for her mother, and she pictured over to herself the scene of their meeting, which turned out unlike all her anticipations. She saw nothing but a rather formal curtsey, a low bow, and a hand-shake, and heard nothing but a quietly uttered greeting such as it seemed to her might have passed well enough between people who had parted only the day before, but which was scarcely eager enough for friends who had not met for many years. Presently, she heard Sir Stuart saying—


‘I am sorry I do not see you in better health;’ and her mother quietly replying—

‘I thank you very much. I have not been strong for some time, but we are hoping great things from Exmouth air.’

Then Marjorie thought she had heard enough, and slipped away out of the room, a little disappointed, a little chilled; but the elderly people

whom she left behind her were neither disappointed nor chilled. In Sir Stuart's eyes, this, the beloved lady of his youth and early manhood, seemed lovelier than ever; the chastened calm of expression, like that of a great sea now at rest, but over which wild storms had swept, and the silvered hair, only made her more beautiful, more dear to his faithful heart. And Lady Ericson sat resting in the sense of being cared for, and of strong, thoughtful guardianship—the feeling which had always come to her in Stuart's presence, from the time, long ago, when he had defended her from the 'big bubblejock and the black dog' in the dear old Scotch home; and little she cared, if indeed she even knew, that the face was parchment-coloured, and that many a wrinkle and many a pucker sat round the kindly blue eyes and the large smiling mouth. All she knew,—and knew that to her heart's great content,—was that the eyes were kindly, and the mouth wearing that large sunny smile which few persons could look at without feeling impelled thereby to smile in return—the smile that gave the great rugged face its wonderful charm and beauty, and its marked resemblance to the more classically-moulded face of Mr. Lindsay, the old Scottish clergyman whose name was an abiding memory in the hearts of all who had ever seen him, who had ever come even for a short time within the magic of his influence, who had ever felt the singular charm of his presence.

It was somewhat strange that just as Lady Ericson was thinking of the striking resemblance



between these two men, Sir Staart's eye was attracted by the small oil-painting on the chiffonière; in another moment he was in front of it; the next it was in his hands, and with emotion which he neither could, nor cared to conceal, he walked away with it to the window, and stood there gazing intently and lovingly at the artistically executed and life-like portrait.

‘What a treasure you have in this,’ he said at last after several minutes, in which Lady Ericson had considerably spoken no word, but had suffered him to feel himself, as it were, once more alone with his oldest and dearest friend. ‘What would I not have given many a time for such a treasure as this; when and where did you obtain it, dear madam, for I do not think that you had it with you in India?’

‘No, I had not; it was accidentally left behind in a box with many other treasures bequeathed to me by my godmother, Mrs. Angus; I was in Bath when she died, and I did not return to Scotland before leaving Europe for India; I had written directions to the maid who packed my belongings for me to be sure and send me that picture. But she mistook my orders, and placed it with a number of things which I did not wish to take out with me, in a great cedar-lined chest of dear grandmother's, and which was never unfastened until I returned from India after my marriage.’

‘Ah! I could wish that you had had this with you in India.’

‘So do I, most heartily,’ replied Lady Ericson, with slightly agitated look and manner; adding, ‘If you will allow me to trouble you with a rather long story, I will tell you why I so earnestly wish it.’


‘Pray tell me; there is nothing that I should like better than to hear your long story.’

‘You know then that Mrs. Angus was my godmother, and that she was Mr. Lindsay’s niece?’

‘I know that she was Mr. Lindsay’s niece, and I have heard both you and Mr. Lindsay himself say that she was your godmother; but, I confess that that has somewhat puzzled me, for were you not, dear madam, born in India, and surely Mrs. Angus was never there?’

‘I was born in India about a year after the arrival there of my father and mother, who had been married in France, my mother’s native land. There were then very few European ladies in India, almost none unmarried, and, as you doubtless know, there was not then a chaplain or any clergyman of our own Church provided for English people. My father asked one of the good and holy Danish missionaries to baptise me, with the intention that I should be received into the congregation whenever I should arrive in Scotland, which was my destined home from the hour of my birth. But my going there was a little delayed by my poor young mother’s ill health and her reluctance to part with me. When I was nearly two years old she died, and shortly after I was sent to Edinburgh, to dear Grannie, and

she lost no time in taking me to the dear, queer little old chapel,—you mind of it, of course, in Car-rubber's Close,—and having me properly received into the congregation; Mrs. Angus, and Lady Esslemont, and Lord Sinclair standing as sponsors for me. I often believe that I could remember it all, but the vision has grown very faint with later years. Well, Mrs. Angus wrote an account of her small foreign godchild to her uncle, Mr. Lindsay, who was kind enough to take a great interest in me, and he not only wrote a long letter to Mrs. Angus with much about me in it, but also a still longer one addressed to me myself, and which he begged that my godmother would give me on the day of my confirmation. Now I really cannot tell you, for I have no means of knowing, whether or not Mrs. Angus forgot all about these two letters, and even where she had placed them; but, at any rate, I had never heard of them, nor had I had any idea of their existence until after my return from India in 1804. I was in very low spirits one afternoon, and everything seemed to be going against me; and in order to divert my thoughts and feelings, I set about unpacking the large cedar chest which had arrived at Beechwood, my father-in-law's seat, from Scotland two or three days before. I was delighted to see this picture, because—well, because it reminded me of old times, and brought back many pleasant memories of how you used to take care of me and help me when I was a little girl, and also of the kind, good advice you had given me before you went



away back to the camp ; for, of course, you know that you are very like Mr. Lindsay.'

Lady Ericson's voice faltered, and she paused as if for breath ; her colour too a little heightened. Sir Stuart took her hand and said, gently—

'Yes, dear madam, it is a great pleasure to me to think that there is a likeness in me to that dear good man, and I am also glad that it pleased you to see it. I can quite understand that you liked to be reminded of old friends—and I was a very old friend, you know.'

'Yes, indeed,' replied Lady Ericson, looking greatly relieved ; 'an old friend, and always a kind and helpful one.'

'It is very good of you to think so. I hope you will allow me to merit such kind words more than I have ever yet done ; but, please, will you not tell me the remainder of your story about the finding of this picture and of the letters ?'

'Yes, the letters, that is the only curious and interesting part of the matter. Please turn the picture round to the back. Do you see those little gilt pins ? they open all that back part ; and there, folded away between the picture and that sort of door, as it were, I found two letters—the one to Mrs. Angus, and mine. I do not think I can make you understand how strange it felt to see upon the outside of the folded paper the words, "To Mistress Marjorie Hepburn, from her father's old friend, Alexander Lindsay." It was a long time before I ventured to open this message from the dead ; but

when once I had read it, I never again thought of the writer as of one dead; but always as one who is alive for evermore. Somehow, I have never so thoroughly realised the truth that the Christian never dies as I realise it in thinking of him. Sometimes I have even fancied that I felt his presence around me like a palpable, almost a visible, presence.'

'Oh, my dear madam, I have felt it often and often,' cried Sir Stuart, with deep emotion in voice and look. 'I felt the sense of his being, as you say, alive the day that I knelt beside his dead body, even then seeing that once eager, energetic man lying still and motionless, with the wonderful eyes closed, and the busy hands folded and stiffening into marble hardness—I *realised*, as you well describe it, that it was only the body that was dead, that the soul was more eager, more active, more loving than it had ever been; and that happy, comfort-giving realisation has returned to me over and over again, at times when I have most needed it.'

'There must have been something wonderful in that man—some rare spirit of strength and goodness—that even his mere memory should be an abiding and powerful influence,' said Lady Ericson, musingly.

'Yes,' replied Sir Stuart, 'the strength and the goodness that were in him were chiefly known and understood by the influence that they exercised upon others. He was born a ruler and leader of men, and I think we must notice that all great



leaders and rulers, in whatever line or profession, gain their chief honour and renown, not so much from their own comparatively few grand and noble deeds as from the many good actions, smaller in themselves than their own, but infinitely more numerous, which they influence their followers to perform: I mean that a truly great leader always shows forth the greatness of those whom he rules and leads, rather than his own greatness; he shines in them. His is not a single isolated light, but the bright blaze of many lights gathered into one focus, centred in one purpose.'

'I quite see what you mean,' replied Lady Ericson, in a tone of one much interested; adding reverently, 'Isn't it like what the greatest of all leaders did with His first, His eldest followers?'

'Yes, truly; and what He does with His followers now; He says now, as then, "I am glorified in them."'

There was a pause of a few minutes, a happy silence, broken at last by Lady Ericson saying—

'It was you who first showed me in what the reality of life consists, its only worthy aim and purpose; but still it was that letter that guided me into the way to find the reality, and make that aim and purpose mine. I can never tell the comfort and the help that it gave me; and what seems so wonderful to me about it is, that it actually touched upon the very troubles and difficulties which were trying me; his words seemed to suit my own particular state and circumstances in a

manner that I have often been inclined to think was miraculous, and yet I can also see that to any one else, any other woman, the advice and help would have been just as great. Would you like to read this letter from your old friend whom you had the privilege of knowing personally, which I had not?’

‘Like it? indeed I should, dear madam, if it would not be doing me too great a kindness.’

‘I do not think that it would be possible for me to do that to you, my dear sir,’ said Lady Ericson, unlocking a small desk which stood on the table beside her, adding, as she handed the letter to the General, ‘but you are the first person to whom I have ever shown it, although I have read bits of it to my children.’

The General took and opened the time-worn letter with what might be called a reverent gesture, and turning a little aside from Lady Ericson, entered, as it seemed to him, into a renewal of intercourse with the long-departed friend of his youth, who he almost believed stood before him as he read, for the written words were, as all his had been, so thoroughly part of himself—the free, full, spontaneous, and glad giving out of his own best self—that they seemed to speak with his voice, and not as if they were being read, but as if they were being heard. The sermons and theological treatises which he has left as a rich legacy to the Church have all this peculiar charm of being living words, so that truly can it be said of him that he

'being dead, yet speaketh.' When Sir Stuart Hepburn had finished reading the letter he no longer felt that wonder which had been in his mind since the commencement of the interview with Lady Ericson; the pleased wonder at the marked improvement in her whole nature, the great superiority of her middle age to her youth; dear as the girl had been, he felt that the woman could be dearer still, because more honoured, more worthy of reverent admiration; and as he recognised that this increased worthiness was due to the wise and kindly guidance which had come to her just when most needed, he once again inwardly thanked God, as he had often done before, for the great gift of human influence and the value of holy human example.

No comments upon such a letter could either be needed or given; the 'Thank you' with which Sir Stuart handed it back to Lady Ericson was sufficient for each of the friends, and then their conversation diverged into the channel of Lady Ericson's health.

'This is not exactly the best or healthiest part of the town, dear madam; I confess that I should like to see you somewhere else.'

'Thank you very much, General, but I do not think that I can manage any other part of the town—in the fashionable quarters the rents are higher than I should like to give, or indeed than I could give.'

'I do not advise your moving to a more fashion-



able part, I should like you to be more out of the town; I know of a really delightful cottage kept by a widow, in whom I am interested, close to the sea, and yet in a retired, flowery lane quite in the country, and with a nice, pretty garden.'

'I *should* like that, I love a garden; but have you any idea what the rent would be?' asked Lady Ericson, with a little flush of anxiety and proper pride.

'Yes, I do happen to know what Mrs. Martin, who has never let lodgings before, wishes to have,' and Sir Stuart named the sum.

'That is no more than I give here,' cried Lady Ericson. 'I could move next week; it would be delightful. Will you be so very kind as to make arrangements for me?'

'Yes, with the greatest pleasure. I will settle it all for you,' and Sir Stuart smiled to himself, for part of his yesterday's work had been the hiring for a year this furnished cottage, and offering the charge and the profits to be gained from so letting it to Mrs. Martin, one of his many pensioners who had been only too thankful for his kindness, and who had really named the very terms which he had told Lady Ericson, as those which she wished to receive, and he had said to her that he would do his best to procure lodgers for her, adding that it was not improbable that he would at once be able to do so. He had made another little arrangement that morning, and it remained for him to bring that forward as cleverly and delicately as he had

managed the other. He had hired at the best livery stables as pretty and easy a little open carriage as was to be found at that date, and a pair of quiet Exmoor ponies, and had ordered them up for the summer season to his own coach-house and stable; so he said—

‘And now, dear madam, I must ask you to do me a great favour. I have a little carriage and a pair of ponies; they will not have enough to do if you will not be so kind as to use them. If you will allow David to take them to you every fine day and to drive you out, you will do me and the ponies and David a real service.’

Lady Ericson smiled. ‘And myself a great kindness; but I am not so foolish, I hope, as to refuse myself such a pleasure and benefit because I can see how much greater a favour it will be to me than to you or your ponies, my dear General.’

The General laughed. ‘My dear lady, I am sure you know that horses must be properly exercised.’

‘Yes, of course I do; and it will give me great satisfaction to be of so much use in the world. But this once you must just let me forget my exceeding usefulness, and say thank you very much for your true kindness.’

Sir Stuart bent over the hand which Lady Ericson held out, and said very gently—

‘There would be no kindness too great, or rather none great enough, for me to offer to your father’s daughter. You know what I owe to him, and it will only increase my happy obligations to him if

you will allow me to help you in any way that is within my poor power.'

'Nay, it isn't a case of allowing, my dear sir; I rather think that I have often asked you for kindness and help from the day when I used to run to you for protection from the big bubble-jock and the black dog.'

## CONCLUSION.

AN almost perfectly happy summer was that for Stuart Hepburn, although he spent it in Devonshire and not in Scotland, where he generally passed the warm months of every year. What chiefly made it a happy time to him was that he was enabled to give much pleasure to Lady Ericson; and to make other people happy had ever been his chief happiness. During a necessary business visit to London he sought and formed the acquaintance of the guardians of the young Ericsons, and made so favourable an impression upon them that they willingly consented to his request that the boys might spend their summer vacation with him in his house at Exmouth. How much joy he gave to mother and sons by that kindly scheme, let mothers and sons judge for themselves. Little Philip learnt to love the General with a devoted love which never cooled or faded, but which lives in him to this day, although its object has long been taken out of his earthly sight.

One day, at dinner, towards the close of those wonderfully delightful holidays—which long after served as an era in the boys' lives from which to date events—Philip said to the General, who had just promised him some much-desired treat, 'How I wish we could live with you always! If you were our father, how famous it would be; and——' but there the boy suddenly stopped, receiving a kick under the table, and a frown from his elder brother, who was old enough to think such a remark highly improper, and yet not old enough to have the sense to refrain from saying, 'Don't make an ass of yourself, Phil! Don't you see that that's as good as asking him to marry mother!'

Philip swallowed his wrath and the pain of the kick together with a piece of pine-apple which Sir Stuart, with ready tact, put upon his plate, and said no more on the forbidden subject; but it had not needed his remark to put into Sir Stuart's mind the thought of the possibility of marrying Lady Ericson, or at least, of asking her to marry him. All through his life he had, as it were, been guided what to do; where many roads had met and diverged, the one road in which he was intended to walk had, he believed, been pointed out to him by no uncertain or doubtful intimation; and he thought that in this new episode of life the way was made clear for him; most certainly he had not sought Lady Ericson, nor had she sought him; they had been brought together without contrivance or arrangement of their own, and he was inclined to



take this, and the fact that her children loved him greatly, as indications that this one other deep and beautiful joy—almost the only joy that had hitherto been denied to him—might fairly and rightfully be his ; that he might stretch out his hand and strive to obtain that happiness, for that it would be happiness every thrill of his heart, as he thought of it, assured him.

During these months (for it was now the end of September) in which he had held constant intercourse with Lady Ericson, he had learnt more and more to love and esteem her ; the beauty of her character and the excellence of her life had grown upon him day by day, and he could scarcely bear the thought that the fair and lovely picture might be withdrawn from his gaze if he did not strive to make and keep it his own ; but he had his fears. Was he not presuming far beyond his merits in even imagining that Lady Ericson would bestow upon him this happiness ? Once, indeed, when honour and manly love itself had rendered it impossible to seek her love, the thought that in a happier hour his affection might have been returned, had forced itself into his mind ; but, now, he felt that though the happier hour was come, the hour when there was no barrier of God's or of man's creating between them, he had no reason to believe that his love would be returned in the measure in which it was given. There had been nothing in Lady Ericson's manner or words to give him reason to think that she could be induced to entertain the

idea of a second marriage, either with himself or any one else; indeed, he could not but tell himself that there was that in her manner and bearing which, were he an uninterested bystander, would lead him to declare that it was her intention and desire to continue a widow. With this conviction strong within him, he asked himself whether it would not be unkind and selfish to put her to the pain of refusing one to whom she showed marked friendship and kindness of feeling. Whilst he was in this state of hesitation, another seemingly little matter decided him as to what course he should take. Meeting Marjorie one day on the sands, he noticed that her face was not so bright as usual, and after some questioning he drew from her her fear that mamma was thinking of leaving Exmouth, and going back to the neighbourhood of London, where they had lived previously to their coming into Devonshire. His own grief and sudden heart-sinking on hearing of the possibility of Lady Ericson's removal decided him that he must at least tell her the truth as regarded his feelings concerning her; and then, if her decision should be adverse to his wishes, bear the pain that would ensue as best he could. He went immediately to visit her, requesting Marjorie to go and play with David—a treat of which she was particularly fond—until he should come back to her; but before the General set forth on his mission he went to his desk, and took from one of its innermost recesses a thin folded paper, which he placed in

the pocket-book that he habitually carried about with him.

After a few words of ordinary talk with Lady Ericson, Sir Stuart said—

‘May has given me a great start and disappointment by telling me that you have some thoughts of leaving Exmouth. I hope that she has made some mistake as to your intentions.’

‘I did not mean to tell you just yet, General; but I certainly have decided to leave here about the end of next month.’

‘Indeed, dear madam, I am sorry that we cannot make you happy here; the place agrees with you so well too. I had hoped you would have remained amongst us.’

There was such a genuine look of regret and disappointment in the General’s frank, blue eyes that Lady Ericson scarcely knew what to reply, and she reproached herself more than ever for the feeling which had gained strength spite of all her efforts to crush it—the feeling of an affection, deeper than friendliness, for Sir Stuart—a feeling which she condemned as alike unwomanly and absurd, being, as it was, entertained for one who thought of her in no other light than as an old friend whom he had known from childhood. Now that he sat opposite to her, looking at her with pain in his eyes, she did not know what to answer she tried to say, lightly and laughingly—

‘You see, I never intended to stay here always; indeed, I would not have remained so long but for

the kindness that has made the place so pleasant to me. I can never thank you enough for your goodness and kindness to me—never.'

'Dear madam, you can show me, if you will, kindness a million times greater than anything that I have ever done for you.'

'*I can?* Then I am sure, my dear sir, I *will*—most gladly. What is it?'

Sir Stuart drew a little nearer, and, spite of high courage, his voice trembled, as he replied—

'If, madam, you will take care of a battered old soldier, and be a right arm to him.'

The keen sense of fun, and the natural light-heartedness (that blessed heritage of the Hepburns, and of many Scotch families, bearing them up under numerous trials and difficulties), shone forth in Lady Ericson's answering words and smiles.

'My dear sir, it would be a poor bargain for you, for if I were to be your right arm, you would have to be both feet to me; remember what a poor cripple I am.'

'I should know no greater earthly joy than to be feet to you! Will you then give it to me?'

Lady Ericson struggled with herself; a certain preconceived opinion was so deeply and firmly rooted within her, that she could not believe that Sir Stuart was acting from any other motive than that of intense and unselfish kindness to the daughter of the house to whom he considered he owed all possible service and devotion. After a

minute of yearning desire to be able to answer otherwise, she said, with a gentle kindness which took some of the edge off the words—

‘I cannot pretend not to understand your meaning, but indeed I could not allow you to sacrifice yourself in the way you propose; the kindness must not be all on your side. Pray do not be angry with me,’ she added, hastily, for something in Sir Stuart’s eyes both awed and surprised her.

‘It would be impossible for me to be angry with you; but you have grieved me deeply; it grieves me that you should imagine that I could insult you, or any woman—you least of all—by asking you to marry me without loving you. Because I love you better than any one in the whole world I ask you to marry me, not because I consider it a kindness due to you and to our friendship.’

By this time the tears were in Lady Ericson’s eyes, and she could only stretch out her hand, and say—

‘My dear sir, please forgive me, I know you are all goodness; but indeed I cannot understand how you should have learnt to—to care for a sickly invalid—an old woman, too;’ and the unfailing smiles shone through the tears.

The General, smiling also, took the outstretched hand, and carrying it to his lips, said—

‘I love the old woman—if you will have it that you are old—because I loved the young woman, the girl, and the child always, nearly all her life, and no other in the same way.’

It was Lady Ericson's turn to look surprised, and she did.

'I think you must be deceiving yourself, General, or forgetting, for——'

'Stay,' interrupted Sir Stuart. 'You are thinking of a time when it was my duty to make you believe that I had no other affection than that of an old friend for you. If I had told you then what my feelings were, I should have been the basest of scoundrels; but now, let me tell you the whole story, and you will at last believe me, only do not let us blame the dead more than we can help.'

The General did tell the whole story, and Lady Ericson listened in deep emotion; finally, he took the folded paper from his pocket-book, and handed it to her; it was the water-stained, faded letter he had written to her so many years ago. She read it, and as, with her eyes full of tears, she finished its last kindly, loving words, she exclaimed almost involuntarily—

'Oh, how sad that so much happiness should have been lost so long!'

'Nay, dearest madam; it will seem all the more dear because it has been long waited for. I could almost be afraid of such joy, only I know that God has sent it, as surely as He sent all the sorrows.'

Lady Ericson fully believed that the General's joy, however great it might be, could not possibly equal hers, for she was filled with esteem amounting to veneration, as well as love, for him with whom she was to spend the remainder of her life. She

could understand now how perfect had been his self-denial, how full of noble honour his conduct, and could realise somewhat at least of the sin and misery from which they had saved her; and in her giving up of herself now into his keeping, there was the most complete trust and confidence, as well as fulness of love. Young people may be inclined to think that there could be no romance in this elderly wooing; but the elderly lovers themselves thought that no wooing had ever been more full of beautiful romance, the more beautiful because healthy and pure.

A great many external pleasures and accompaniments grew up and gathered themselves around this wooing. The delighted, thankful ecstasy of Lady Ericson's children was a source of real satisfaction to her. Her first cousin also, the present head of the Hepburn family, was so cordially pleased that he begged to be allowed to come to the wedding, and to give her away. He came some days before the event, and was the guest of the General, whilst Miss Ericson, the sister of the late Sir Ralph Ericson, although an invalid, exerted herself to be with Lady Ericson for more than a fortnight before the quiet but thoroughly happy event, which took place, on a lovely autumn day, in the parish church of Littleham. An hour before the marriage Sir Stuart finished a business arrangement with Mr. Hepburn, an arrangement carefully hidden from Lady Ericson, but one which was an additional joy to the General, because he was confident that it

would give great pleasure to her who was so soon, after so many long years of separation, to become his dear and honoured wife.

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It was on the 24th of May, 1850, the anniversary of the opening of Hepburn's Hospital and Sir Stuart's eightieth birthday, and last, not least, it was the anniversary of the happy day which gave birth to the good and virtuous Lady who was at that date in the prime of her youth and happiness, and had reigned nearly thirteen years over loving and faithful subjects, to whom she is as dear now as she was then, nay, dearer, for a union that has lasted over forty years is closely cemented and binding in its associations. It was then the 24th of May, and for all these reasons there was a great gathering of the Hepburn and Ericson families in the gardens and groves of 'The Dens,' which had been Sir Stuart and Lady Hepburn's home for thirty years; the arrangement with Mr. Hepburn which Sir Stuart had completed an hour before his marriage having been the taking a lease (afterwards renewed) of this dear home of his wife's youth, and one associated with many bright and pleasant



memories to himself. For the first few years after their marriage, the General and his wife had been in the habit of residing at 'The Dens' for only six months of each year, from May till October, and of migrating to the south of England for the winter and early spring; but as by degrees they had found themselves growing stronger in health, and feeling the climate less and less trying, they prolonged their yearly stay in Scotland, until at last they settled there altogether, well content at heart never to leave the country of their dearest affections, the land of their forefathers, for Lady Hepburn never allowed her husband to forget that he and she were of one family, and had common ancestors and common interests.

Those thirty years that had come and gone since the wedding in Littleham parish church had brought their own inevitable changes, but these changes had more nearly and intimately affected the younger people than the couple who had tranquilly passed from middle life into the hushed, still calm, and moonlight happiness of old age. Mr. Hepburn had distinguished himself first at the Bar, and then on the Bench had gained well-deserved fame, and added another illustrious son to the house which had been blessed with so many, the house of which he was the head, and that in a way delightful to all its branches; for in the eighth year of her happy reign the Queen had given a proof (one amongst many) of her filial and reverent attachment to her royal ancestors, the Stuarts, and of

her kind and tender appreciation of those who had rendered them loyal and loving service, by restoring, in the person of this eminent lawyer, the ancient title of Baron Hepburn of Hepburn, so that once more the family could speak of its 'chief,' Lord Hepburn, and rejoice even more in the fact that it was a title not likely soon to become extinct, seeing that there was also a 'Master of Hepburn,' a goodly, well-favoured youth, with three equally healthy brothers and one little sister, at this period of which we now write just six years old, whose name, of course, was Marjorie; for her mother, her bonnie loved and loving mother, an ornament to society and the idol of her home, was our whilom little friend, the Marjorie Hepburn Ericson whose fall on the beach at Exmouth led to such a happy meeting between long-parted friends. On the occasion of this family gathering, Lord and Lady Hepburn, the one little daughter and two sons, were at 'The Dens;' also Sir Ralph Ericson, his wife (a daughter of Sir Stuart's step-sister), and their two eldest children. And Philip was there—once little Phil, but now, what he had been for many years, an honest-hearted, zealous clergyman, who had refused livings in England that he might devote himself to the Church in Scotland, and being settled in a great seaport not far from 'The Dens,' was not unfrequently a guest there, being an additional gladness to his parents' lives, which, to use Stuart's own words, were brimming over with gladnesses. Within the last two years his visits had not been so frequent,

for he had married a veritable Scottish lassie who had never yet been across the Tweed, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Corrieburn, whom he had wooed and won when she was barely out of the schoolroom, and upon whom the influences of fashionable life had never been tried, though they could not have spoilt that fresh, blithe-hearted, sweet-natured girl, who shared with joyous goodwill in all those good works of her husband in which she could and might share. Philip and Lady Lillian, and their son of two months old, were at 'The Dens,' so, as may well be believed, the old house almost overflowed, and the way in which they were all stowed away, without any appreciable discomfort, partook somewhat of the nature of a miracle, so at least said 'the mistress,' by which homely Scotch title, and by that of 'Grannie,' she was often called, to distinguish her from the other Lady Hepburn, her daughter. But, on this particular day, the day which for so many reasons was a great festival, there were gathered together upon the lawns and in the gardens several other people besides the sons and daughters of the house, people who in one sweet and dear sense of the word were more truly 'the children' of the aged master. It had come into the mind of Philip, a mind ever kindly, ever unselfish, to bring there, for the enjoyment of a day of rest and of country air, as many of those men and women, once children educated in Hepburn's Hospital, as were settled within anything like a reasonable distance of 'The Dens;'

several of them were mechanics and artisans in Glasgow, and Paisley, and Dundee, others were in shops, or offices, or private families in those cities, and in Edinburgh; and after a little trouble, and a good deal of contrivance and arrangement, the thing had been managed, and between thirty and forty men and women of all ages, from sixteen and upwards (some of them bringing husbands, and wives, and bairns), who owed all their comfort and happiness in life under God to General Hepburn, met that beautiful May day in the grounds of their benefactor, to keep the anniversary of the opening of his splendid charity and the birthday of the Queen, whom the loyal heart of this their best earthly friend loved faithfully as the representative and descendant of that right royal race in whose behalf his own kith and kin had gladly shed their blood. Some days cannot be described; some joys lose in the narration; and one of these was the joy that filled the unselfish heart of the aged Sir Stuart Hepburn as he went about amongst his humble guests: virtuous, respectable husbands and wives, young men and maidens whom his exertion and self-denial and faithful keeping of a youthful vow had saved from poverty and neglect, and probably from sin and sin's punishment here and hereafter. One amongst the young men was a soldier, a sergeant in a Highland regiment; and it is easy to guess with what pleasure the old general officer talked to his non-commissioned brother in arms, and with what interest

his stories of the great Mahratta war were listened to.

By a little after seven in the evening this large company had dispersed;—gone to the station half a mile from ‘The Dens’ lodge-gates, to be taken into Edinburgh, and thence to be scattered to their various homes. The evening was so beautiful that all the people staying in the house (except Philip and his wife, who were escorting the travellers to the station) lingered in the grounds, wandering about in twos or threes, but constantly returning to chat for a few minutes with ‘the master and the mistress,’ who were sitting together in their favourite out-of-door’s resting-place; a wide, softly-cushioned bench in a cosy, sheltered angle (close to the drawing-room window) formed by the jutting out of the high, square tower, all covered by one great spreading ivy, out of the luxuriant masses of which peeped the latticed windows of two large rooms, at this time wholly given up as nursery and play-room for the many bairns of the house. The master and mistress sat there in the shelter and the shade, but seeing well the long ‘golden arrows of sunset’ slanting across the bits of velvet lawn, and burnishing the polished leaves of the laurels in the sheltering hedge round the ‘Parterre,’ glorifying with indescribable beauty of colour the three great sweeping copper-beeches; and dancing a merry twinkling measure upon the river, not the Forth, but one of her prettiest tributaries, that was slipping and sliding along in the fertile carse below their feet.

Presently, after the grand-parents had been left alone a little longer than usual, Lady Hepburn came up and said—

‘Grandpapa, I wish you would come for a minute into the drawing-room. There is something there I should like to show you.’

‘Certainly, my dear; and, mistress, won’t you come too? a little stirring about will do us both good after sitting so long.’

The mistress took her husband’s offered arm, and he, timing his still firm, steady step to her slow and faltering pace, followed his step-daughter into the drawing-room and to the furthest window, over which were drawn the heavy curtains. Lady Hepburn pushed one aside, and holding it back with her hand, displayed to view, cuddled upon the cushioned window-seat, a merry-faced, laughing child, her black curls just touched with powder, and drawn up from her brow; dressed in a quilted pink satin skirt, with panier of flowered white silk; her tiny arms covered with long, white kid, pearl-embroidered gloves. The old General gazed a minute or more, and said no word; then, with his blue eyes shining through a mist of happy tears, he turned and clasped his aged wife in his arms, and she heard, though none else did, the words ‘My baby sweetheart! My love! my wife.’ Her own eyes were full, and for an instant the two rested in each other’s embrace, and no sound stirred the sweet, calm evening air; but the little girl in the window-seat grew frightened at the stillness,

Phil, we are glad to have you.' 'And,' added Sir Stuart, 'I am particularly pleased to have you, for I am sure you will take my side; your mother has been trying her best to make me discontented.'

'My mother, surely not!'

'Nay, Philip, nay; your father maligns me. He was talking so rapturously about his great and wonderful happiness that I could not help feeling that he has had many disappointments; never just the best of anything; he has always had to take care of everybody, instead of being taken care of; he has had only a sickly, old wife, and no children of his own, and——'

'There, Philip,' interrupted the General, 'you hear her yourself! I think I have had the very best of everything, all that I have wished for; and as for children, why! I have had all of you, what more could I desire?'

Mr. Ericson's heart was glowing. 'Dear father, you have us, and our love, indeed, but I think you have more and better blessings; "as with the master so with the servant;" after the sight we have seen to-day, surely you may with all reverence, remembering Him by Whom it was first said, say—

"Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me."

'Oh! Philip, thank you,' said his mother softly, as her hand sought her husband's and clasped it tenderly. 'Stuart, it is true, is it not?'

After a long pause, the General said, 'It is

almost too great a joy, too high a reward ; but now, dear wife, you will never pity me any more.'

'No, I will not,' she answered earnestly.

'You have done good to-night, Philip, you see ; besides, it is time that I should thank you for the great happiness you gave us all by gathering all those dear people together ; it has been such a wonderfully happy day.'

'Yes, wife, it has been that, and so has been almost my whole life ; believe it, Marjorie, will you not ?'

'I must if you tell me so.'

'Aye, you may do that, truly. He has given me my heart's desire, and fulfilled all my mind.'

Philip slipped quietly away, but could not refrain from turning to look once again at the aged couple sitting in the hush and tender tints of the gloaming, saying to himself, as he looked—

'In the keeping of Thy law there is great delight.'

THE END.



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